Teaching Writing for Ethical Transformation: A Relational Pedagogy for the Construction of Student Voices in Theological Writing

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Abstract

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In theological education in the United States, writing is taught primarily as an individualistic pursuit in which students demonstrate knowledge acquisition and conformity to the standards of academic English. This creates significant problems for students who hail from educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds unlike that of the dominant academic context. To address these problems, educators must expand beyond our vision of writing as a utilitarian product created in solitude to see it as a process of student ethical transformation that assists students to construct voices that connect to who whey are and better relate to their audiences and their contexts of ministry.

Several resources are explored to support theological educators in enacting this pedagogical shift: 1) composition theory and linguistics describing writing as a socio-rhetorical activity that can aid students in the generative struggle of creating voices; 2) intersectional theory for an analysis of the construction a major theological figure's prophetic voice; and 3) South African Ubuntu theology to reframe writing as an intentional relational process concerned with the ethical dimensions of communication. The final chapter outlines a practical process of pedagogical change for learners in the classroom and for theological institutions themselves.

Given the radical change in the context of ministry and the demographics of our student bodies, theological educators must transform how we teach writing in order to

recognize and respond to the educational needs of our diverse students as they prepare for a wide range of vocational callings; to enliven theological writing in the academy; and to increase writing's relevance and responsiveness to the world and church in which we live and share our lives of faith.

Dedication

In memory of my teachers,

Sherrill Prevatte Senseney (1956–2006)
Howard Lee Harrod (1932-2003)
Frederick Stanley Lusby (1924-2008)

AND

With thanksgiving for my siblings, who were my first students,

Edgar Turner Overton
Karen Anne Overton
Virginia Lee Overton

Tell me something good. ~ Chaka Khan

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Preface

Almost every day, I ask myself how in the world I ended up doing the work that I do. My answer always comes back to my relationships with students at Vanderbilt Divinity School and Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry. Their reflections about their struggles and successes in writing have driven this project, showing me the way forward, telling me what is needed in writing instruction in theological education. These relationships have given me a greater awareness of how human beings communicate with each other in different contexts. They are how I arrived at the writing of this dissertation, which is my own effort to construct a voice that communicates with others in an intentional way as to better relate the world of ideas, other people in the form of my readers, the wider publics that I eventually wish to reach, and God.

I did not set out to take this path. I serendipitously ended up teaching my friends and colleagues who were struggling with writing at Vanderbilt Divinity School from 2006-2009. Almost all of the students with whom I worked at VDS were United States citizens with English as their first (and, in most cases, only) language. These included White students who had been raised in poor rural areas in the Southeast, where high schools sometimes did not provide senior English; Black students from urban centers in the Southeast and Midwest, many of whom had grown up in predominantly Black neighborhoods and some of whom had attended historic Black colleges and universities; and older women from a variety of racial/ethnic/linguistic backgrounds who had received their previous educations in the sciences, medicine, and music. These students were academically capable, creative people who read deeply and critically, excelled in class discussions, and contributed in a variety of ways to the whole VDS community. Yet all of

them struggled with writing and came to me for support as they pondered how to write in what was, for them, "another language." As their friend, I offered to help them figure out how to write. These initial efforts to support my friends' development as writers led to enthrallment with the potential of the process of writing to shape students' minds and lives in profound ways. I wrote my Senior M.Div. thesis on reforming theological using what is known as a writing across the curriculum approach.

When I arrived at BC in 2009, I did not think I would continue this work on teaching theological writing, but I did so for reasons both mysterious and practical. This has meant working with a much more diverse and international student population, including Latino/a men and women from cities around the United States for whom Spanish is a first language; African students with multiple languages; Middle Eastern students for whom Arabic is a first language; White students from a variety of states and nations, for whom English is a first language; Asian students from linguistic and cultural backgrounds entirely different from ours in the United States; European and Latin American students from different first languages; and many others. Through these students, I began to understand more deeply the complexities and challenges of studying theology at such a high level in a language and culture that is not one's own. My students told me, over and over again, that they felt they had entered a new world of language and culture, one that perplexed them and sometimes scared them but always fascinated them. I was hooked on helping them to construct their voices in their new language for this new world.

In my graduate-level theological research and writing course at BC, my students, usually numbering about thirty-five to forty women and men over two semesters, hailed

from all over the world and read, wrote, and spoke a wide range of languages. In the Spring 2015 class, for example, the ten students came from seven different nations and counted amongst them several other languages besides English. These included two Nigerian students fluent in a local dialect of English with strong British inflections; a student from the Commonwealth of Dominica in the West Indies for whom French Creole is a first language; two South Korean speakers of Korean; a Cameroonian student who knows French and Spanish; a Chilean student who is also fluent in Spanish and French; two Vietnamese-speaking students from Vietnam; and one Malaysian student fluent in Chinese, amongst other languages. In other semesters, I have taught students from the United States, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, India, Burma, and elsewhere with many other national and local languages. The diversity in languages and cultures represented by the students in the course is breathtaking in scope and has opened up new horizons for imagining the future of theological education in the United States.

As recently as the 1970s, most students in theological education were White and male, from families higher up on the socio-economic scale, and educated at United States undergraduate schools. They were from the dominant White culture and had been educated to speak and write using a high register of academic English to communicate. But what I am learning is that these students are not the "norm" anymore. While there are still many elite, White males enrolled in our institutions, they are sitting in classes next to the French-speaking Jesuit priest from Burkina Faso, the Black mother and interdenominational parish pastor from Chicago, the Latina laywoman from East Boston

who was raised in a Spanish-speaking neighborhood and church, the Presbyterian pastor from Korea, and on and on.

The students from non-dominant educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds study in classes with students from the dominant culture, language, and educational system, but they do not speak or write or think in the ways that typical academics speak, write and think. They are being taught, most likely, by people like me who know the dominant language of academia and expect our students to speak, write and think like us. After all, we are the academic success story and we know how things are supposed to go in the academy. But if we listen to our students, we discover that, while they value learning from us, they need help bridging the gaps between who they are when they arrive, what we expect them to be, and who they can become through the process of studying. Students from diverse, non-dominant backgrounds know that they need not only the content and the critical thinking skills that academic study in theology offers, but they do not always agree that they should learn to write only for the sake of academic expectations.

I have learned over the past several years of teaching theological writing that not only students from non-dominant backgrounds, but also students who are from the dominant culture and language of the United States are in need of different writing skills than the ones we currently focus on. Many White, English-speaking elite students as well as those from different educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds have other goals in mind than becoming published scholars and teachers; they want their studies to help them prepare for a wide range of vocational callings. Students from all over the world, including the United States' best colleges and universities, want to write a good academic

essay for us, but they need their writing to be more practical for them as they prepare to give sermons, write church newsletters, develop curricular materials for religious education classes, pen op ed pieces for local newspapers, respond to denominational inquires about their parishes, research and write grants for various projects they are leading, etc. These diverse people came to us because they want to be better able to serve their communities, and academic writing focused on conveying intellectual content in the standard academic form is not the only or even best way to accomplish that goal.

For all students, learning to write using the tools of the dominant culture and language is a good thing, as academic writing fosters much-needed critical thinking skills in our students. However, my students at both Vanderbilt and BC have shown me that writing can be so much more than this if we help them acquire the skills they need and want in order to write in a variety of ways. If we, as theological educators, resist limiting writing to demonstrations of knowledge acquisition in the dominant language and culture, writing can be a process in and through which students can come to better understand, analyze, and transform themselves and their relationships with the world of ideas, with other people, with institutions, and with God. Writing itself, when undertaken with awareness and intentionality, is a pathway to becoming a sharp critical thinker, a creative leader, and a caring and justice-oriented person. It is more, not less, intellectually demanding to write with an understanding of the power dynamics between the writer, her reader, and her context. It is more, not less, evocative of critical thinking skill development to recognize and make conscious decisions about the socio-rhetorical dimensions of one's writing. It is more, not less, transformative of a student to invite her

to engage with writing as a real communication happening between persons rather than as a static object delivered from one doorstep (or email account) to the next.

My hope in writing this dissertation is that I honor my students, colleagues, and friends by arguing well that teaching writing in theological education must change, not only for the benefit of the diverse students who attend our classes, but also for the good of the academy, the church, and the world whom they are preparing to lead and serve.

Chapter One

Understanding the Gaps: The Changing Context of Theological Education & the Challenge of Writing Theology in the Twenty-first Century

> We teachers might better enable our students for life and for their vocations if we shifted the emphasis from the acquisition of knowledge to the process of learning.
> ~ Edward P.J. Corbett[1]

I. *Theological Writing: From Utilitarian Product to Transformative Process*

In theological education, as in higher education in the United States more generally, writing functions primarily as a product used for the dual purpose of demonstrating learning (by graduate students) and evaluating students' work (by theology professors). This utilitarian academic dimension of composition has practical value because it offers students an opportunity to think theologically and provides professors with a window into each student's grappling with the course content. However, the understanding of writing as an academic end alone brings with it significant problems for today's diverse theology students and limits the potential of writing to be transformative of and for students as they study theology and ministry in preparation for a life of ministry and theological reflection in communities. Another approach to writing, one that is process-oriented, is needed.

Academic utility is neither the only nor the best purpose for the inclusion of writing in the theological curriculum because teaching writing primarily as an intellectual and academic product rather than as a process and a reflection of ongoing personal and professional development causes a set of problems for the wide range of students now enrolling in divinity schools, seminaries, and schools of theology and ministry around the

[1] Edward P.J. Corbett, "Rhetoric, The Enabling Discipline" [1972] in *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, edited by E.P.J. Corbett, Nancy Myers, and Gary Tate (New York: Oxford UP, 2000), 29.

United States. No longer exclusively White,[2] male, educationally elite, and socially and economically privileged, students are increasingly coming into theological education in the United States from outside the ranks of elite student groups, and many are coming from previous careers, from science and technology backgrounds, and from other nations. A growing number hail from educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds unlike the dominant academic language and culture expected at universities in the United States. And most of them engage in theological study in order to prepare themselves more fully for ministerial calls outside of the academic settings.

These students from diverse backgrounds are often brilliant in the classroom and in one-on-one discussions with their professors and colleagues. However, they often feel unsuccessful with their writing. Additionally, their professors often evaluate their writing as sub-par, and their grades reflect this negative critical evaluation. These students sometimes receive so much (or so little) feedback on their writing that they are paralyzed and unable to determine how to respond. They can't figure out how to improve their writing on their own, and often they are not sure of what resources are available to help them accomplish their writing goals, if any such resources exist at their institutions at all. These students are preoccupied with creating the "right" product to please or impress their professors, but they may not know what they are aiming for and do not have a sense of the process of writing that might get them to that end.

This situation results from students' lack of preparation to write in United States theological education as it is currently structured, but it is not their problem alone. The

[2] In this and subsequent references to any racial/ethnic group throughout the dissertation, I will capitalize the term of reference: White/Caucasian, Black/African-American, etc. This practice highlights one aspect of the diversity of theology students and theologians now involved in theological education, and it provides consistency throughout the dissertation. My practice may differ from my interlocutors' practices, which I will follow when I quote them directly.

problem with student writing does not lie only with students' lack of preparation, but also with the academy's lack of responsiveness to their presence and to the specific challenges they face in being educated. In particular, the issue of product-oriented academic utility in writing encourages educators to see student writing solely in terms of narrow sets of learning outcomes that students either demonstrate or do not demonstrate by the end of each semester. The prevalence of understanding writing in terms of academic utility also drives faculty and administrators to view problems like plagiarism as black and white issues that can be solved by insisting on students learning clear, absolute rules that must be applied uniformly in every situation, as if issues of wrestling with and documenting outside sources are simple and uncomplicated. Student writing is also one of the only tools used to determine a student's fitness for entrance into, progression through, and graduation from the academy despite other areas of achievement by that student. While student writing can be a means of faculty coming to know what and how students are learning, its transformative significance for students is lost without a greater emphasis on the way in which students go about writing.

By asking theological educators to consider the role of writing differently, I am asking us to think of theological education as a two-way street. On this street, we shape our students to become fine ministers, teachers, activists, and scholars *and* we and our institutions are shaped by them into a new entity that is more responsive to the intellectual, spiritual, and practical problems we face together in the church and the world. Because writing is employed extensively in every course a theology student takes, with rare exceptions, it is a site where students can come to know themselves, the institutions in which they study, their professors, and the writing process more fully. It

also provides and opportunity for educators to come to know more about students, their backgrounds, and their writing strengths and challenges more fully. Intentionally reshaping writing pedagogy in theological education creates a space for mutual learning that will benefit all participants, teachers and students alike.

While this dissertation is focused on writing as a pedagogical resource for theological education and the transformation of students, it is a project driven by a primary concern for student writers from diverse backgrounds who come to theological institutions wanting to learn and willing to work hard but needing different kinds of knowledge and skills than the academy is currently offering them. They know that there is intellectual value in their learning how to write in academic English in the established genres practiced in theological education, for this work not only introduces them to the main conversations within theological education but also sharpens their critical minds and helps them practice analytical skills that may be underdeveloped. However, students are also aware that these are not the only abilities they will need once they graduate and go out into the increasingly complex and changing church and the world to serve in various capacities. They must also develop self-awareness and capacities of integration, possess the ability to describe and assess active situations in their fields of ministry, show creativity in responding to those situations, and cultivate relational competencies for their work with others. Shifting theological educators' approach to teaching writing can assist students with both sets of skills so that students will be better prepared for the complicated work that lies ahead beyond graduation day.

Envisioning theological writing projects in this new way provides an opportunity for theological educators to assist students in a more robust process of self-transformation

in and through writing in theological education. Writing itself is a process that unfolds in fits and starts, and students often repeat certain learnings over years rather than improving in a linear fashion. Student writing deepens and improves the more a student understands her/himself, her/his educational goals for each writing project, the content of the course for which s/he writes, her/his relationship to the audience(s) for whom s/he writes, and the larger context in which s/he writes. With a greater range of critical-rhetorical reflection tools in her/his grasp, the student writer can be guided to make informed choices in her/his writing and create a communicative voice instead of being held captive and rendered nearly mute by a process out of her control. In order to foster this growth in our students' voices, theological educators must cease seeing writing as an academic product alone and become more aware of the ways in which good writing processes unfold. We must come to view writing as a key one of the available pedagogical resources in and through which students can develop more mature and complex understandings of themselves, the academy, the church, and the world and can practice communicating those understandings to others.

One of the best ways for theological educators to best assist our diverse students in unpacking the complex rhetorical situation of writing for and in the academy in order to unleash the transformative potential of writing in theological education is for us to think with students about the matter of their voice or voices. Thus, this dissertation will explore the notion of voice within this rhetorical situation by listening to student voices and those of professionals in theology and ministry; analyzing empirical data about the diversity of students in theological education today in order to gain a more robust sense of who is and will be undertaking this kind of education; and employing various

theoretical tools from composition and rhetoric studies, linguistics, Black feminist/womanist intersectional theory, and feminist and South African Ubuntu theology to understand the complexity of theological writing in the twenty-first century. The goal is to help theological educators reconsider writing instruction within the theological curriculum so that students can engage more fully and fruitfully as learners in and through the process of writing. Doing so usually results in a better product (paper or essay), can often (but not always) result in a better grade, and can provide a positive and meaningful learning experience for the student writer that will shape that student for her/his vocation beyond the degree.

This chapter, which begins our foray into the matter of voice in theological writing, first introduces four recent and current students' voices in reflections about their own writing. What we hear from students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds is that they struggle with writing because they are not prepared to write in the linear, thesis-directed, and narrow style required in academic writing. The next step in this inquiry connects individual students' experiences to larger patterns of change in the demographics of student bodies within theological education. This linking process unfolds with the use of empirical data generated by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and their member institutions and includes engagement with experienced researchers' analyses of past and current enrollments and their predictions for future enrollments in theological education. This data helps us understand the larger patterns of student enrollment in theological education, which point to ever-greater diversity in our student bodies. The third section of the chapter analyzes the gap created in theological education by educators' lack of attention to student diversity in curriculum

development, including writing pedagogies. The fourth section provides new insights about students' experiences writing theology, which can facilitate theological educators' understanding of the writing challenges faced by students in a linguistically, culturally, and educationally diverse student body, enabling educators to better guide students. Fifth, the chapter refines the goal of this dissertation, briefly alludes to the methodology of the project as a whole, and offers an overview of the remaining chapters. The conclusion to the chapter returns to one student's captivating voice to set the stage for further inquiry.

Writing, while it certainly fulfills a necessary utilitarian academic function, is much more than a tool used to produce an intellectual product that can be assessed by theological educators. It is a process of learning and a pathway to becoming in relationship—a way of constructing one's voice or voices in different rhetorical situations, a way of shaping critical thinking and of engaging with others' ideas, and a key way of doing theology with the head, heart, and hands. Writing has a much more intellectually creative and ethically formative role in our thinking and in the doing of theology than theological educators often consider it to have, and it is imperative for us to recognize this. Greater attention to writing-as-process can aid theological educators in fundamentally reforming what we are doing so that the non-traditional students in our classrooms will gain greater benefit from their theological educations, which they can carry with them into their future vocations.

As esteemed rhetoric scholar and writing teacher Edward P.J. Corbett put it in his famous 1972 essay, "Rhetoric, the Enabling Discipline," education reformers have long asserted about teaching writing that "we teachers might better enable our students for life and for their vocations if we shifted the emphasis from the acquisition of knowledge to

the process of learning."[3] What might it look and sound like if theological writing were not just about producing a final product (a paper or set of papers), but became, instead, a process of critically engaged reflection, thoughtful and responsive creation, and robust change not only for each student, but also for the professor, the classroom, and the curriculum in theological education? This chapter—and the dissertation as a whole—aim to answer to this question.

II. *Students' Voices: Who Are Our Student Writers and How Do They Write?*

In order to begin the process of understanding what is unfolding with student writers in theological education today, we must first listen to the voices of students themselves. In my own work teaching writing in two theological institutions in the United States since 2006, I have worked with over 250 students from every continent (except Antarctica) who hail from a variety of different cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. For this project, I invited a few of them to comment on their experiences as theological writers within theological education in the United States, and several graciously agreed to do so. First, we hear from a well-educated Jesuit priest from Spain. Second, we listen to the voice of a White American woman coming back to school for a second career as a priest. Third, we reflect with a Black woman writer, preacher, and pastor from Chicago. Fourth, we listen to the insights of a Jesuit legal scholar from Burkina Faso. The voices of these four students resonate in my own head and heart as I write this dissertation, and they point not only to the complicated experiences of individual writers in academic theological studies, but also to the challenges that

[3] Corbett, "Rhetoric, The Enabling Discipline," 29.

theological educators must face as larger trends in student enrollments lean toward diversity in every aspect of our student bodies.

Chema Segura ~ My Voice, Sound and Aloud

A Jesuit priest from Spain, Fr. Chema Segura, SJ, came to the United States in 2010 to study for the STL (Licentiate of Sacred Theology) degree at Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry. In his late 30s, Segura already had Bachelor's and Master of Divinity degrees from Spanish higher education institutions and extensive training in social justice work and pastoral ministry. He reflects on his experience of writing in a North American context in this way:

> My English learning experience was a painful one. Well, I still find it difficult to write in English. I mean to actually WRITE.
>
> I am not pretending to be poetic, but I dare to say that I experienced an awakening in writing English.
>
> I started a painful deconstruction of my previous bias and ways of writing papers. In my previous academic studies I was used to summarizing the author's opinion and then making my point at the very last, sort of agreeing to disagree with the author, HERS being the important voice.[4]

As an international second-language student coming from an elite educational background in which he wrote in Spanish, doing graduate-level writing in English was a great challenge for Segura. His use of the word "painful" two times in his description of his experience emphasizes the struggle he underwent to write at a Catholic theological institution in the United States. Writing in English did not come easy for him despite an easy fluency in spoken English and a brilliant intellectual mind. This is partially because he had to take apart his previous writing experience—both the writing requirements of theological education in the Spanish context and his approaches to meeting those assignments—in order to figure out how to write in English. He faced the double

[4] Chema Segura, personal email dated February 6, 2015. Used with permission.

challenge of understanding how he formerly wrote in academic Spanish (and why he wrote that way) and then constructing a new way to write in academic English (and why he needed to write that way).

At the same time, Segura also acknowledges that learning to write in English was "an awakening" for him. It was, in the end, a good experience, a learning experience, because of his hard work on his own, with his professors, with the native English-speaking North American Jesuits who worked with him on his papers, and with me as his tutor. All of his diligence resulted in fine essays that not only met the requirements of his coursework and helped him achieve his degree, but also allowed him to create a voice of which he could be proud. To this end, he concludes his recollection in this way:

> It was painful, but it was a lot of fun. Today, I can say that for my STL dissertation I wrote MY thesis. The one I wanted, the way I could, with my weird Spanish-structured English sentences. But it was MY VOICE, sound and aloud. That was for me my experience of learning to write in English.[5]

Crossing over the gap into English from writing in Spanish in terms of everything from sentence structures to the ways in which he was to relate to the theological interlocutors with whom he engaged in his essays, Segura constructed a voice that made sense to him and furthered his intellectual and professional development. It was not an easy process, but he succeeded.

Although an elite White male with a stellar education in European Jesuit institutions, Segura struggled with writing in a theological institution in the United States due to differences in the structure of the language itself and in the academic expectations of theological education here. As we shall see in the next section of this chapter, he is part of a trend of increased international student enrollment in North American

[5] Segura, personal email dated February 6, 2015.

theological education, which often brings with it increased enrollment of bilingual and multilingual students who have a range of challenges when they write in academic English.

Cathy Chalmers ~ With Practice and Good Instruction, I Learned

The Rev. Cathy Chalmers, now an ordained priest in the Independent Catholic Church who serves as a hospital chaplain, was a Master of Divinity student at Vanderbilt Divinity School between 2006 and 2009, when I was there. In her reflections on her experience of writing for theological education, Chalmers, a White American woman in her late 40s at the time of her studies, writes of her own transition from being a professional science writer to being a theology student:

> I had years of professional experience writing for scientific application, mostly technical and business writing. Quality improvement documents, standard operating procedures, lab and site safety plans, and reports of all kinds. Facts. And business letters. Polite rejections and suggestions for those wishing to analyze environmental samples for pollutants. As a science major in college, I did as little work in the humanities as I could get away with; it was not my strength.[6]

Not only was Chalmers trained to write differently during her college education in the biological sciences at a major state university in the United States, but her professional life in science and technical writing had also habituated her to an entirely different way of writing than that demanded of her in theological education. She notes the genres required in her professional experience—the quality improvement documents, business letters, safety plans, and so forth. These are very unlike theological writing, which requires students to produce theological reflections, historical-critical exegetical and critical-hermeneutical essays, theological and ethical arguments, homilies and sermons, and more. After years of professionalization and successful writing in a distant field requiring

[6] Cathy Chalmers, personal Facebook message dated January 19, 2015. Used with permission.

these different genres, Chalmers was unprepared for the jolt that theological writing would give her.

In her reflection on writing in theological education, she offers detailed examples of these day-to-day writing challenges, saying that, after being a professional science writer for so many years…

> Then came Divinity School. I was accustomed to writing in the passive voice, and I had never used the pronoun "I" in anything I'd ever written. It's simply not done in science. Neither was the sort of reflection required for theological discourse. So, the biggest difference for me was the inward turn, the inductive process, and the transition from reporting to reflecting. Speaking my own thoughts and asserting (assertively!) my own conclusions and beliefs, especially on paper, was intimidating. My first papers were book reports (and I cried a lot!), but with practice and good instruction I learned, and capped my degree with Honors on the MDiv project.[7]

A mature and confident woman when she arrived to study theology, Chalmers was not a person lacking in drive and ability, but theological writing at this level caused her great distress and a great deal of struggle. Still, through good practice and by working closely with her professors and with me, Chalmers was able to overcome the difficulties posed by being a second-career theology student writing in new genres for her Master of Divinity.

Although an English-speaker educated in excellent universities in the United States, Chalmers found that she, like Segura, had to learn a different kind of English—a whole new way thinking, a whole new vocabulary, a different syntax, and new forms of writing—in order to communicate theologically. She had to overcome not only previous academic training, but also many years on the job. Her experience is like that of many older women who return to study theology after many years of working and/or raising children. Although Chalmers and Segura are from different cultures and have different

[7] Chalmers, personal Facebook message dated January 19, 2015.

educational and linguistic backgrounds, both of these students represent part of the broad spectrum of experienced professionals who become students again to seek graduate theological educations. Their writing problems are not exactly the same, but similar themes emerge in their struggles with theological writing.

Dawnn M. Brumfield ~ To Succeed In the World of Theological Writing In the Academy

Now an ordained pastor in an interdenominational congregation and a Doctor of Ministry student in pastoral care and counseling at an interdenominational seminary in her hometown of Chicago, The Rev. Dawnn M. Brumfield was a Master of Divinity student at Vanderbilt Divinity School from 2006 to 2009, where she and I talked extensively about her writing. Regarding her experience as a theological writer during her years of study, Brumfield says:

> I've been writing since I was a young girl. I wrote stories as a kid. I wrote journals as a teenager. I read. I wrote. However, learning to write theologically for the academy was an extreme challenge for me. Mostly it was hard because I wasn't used to the language, the style or the circular way the arguments seemed to flow. Added to that frustration was my inability to ask the right questions or to follow an idea from start to finish with enough academic jargon. At times it felt as though my sentences were too simple; my words were straightforward. In the very beginning I felt as though my thinking wasn't abstract enough. If you throw all of this into the mix of learning new concepts, ideas and an entirely new language for describing God, power and systems, I felt overwhelmed at best. I remember thinking that I was way out of my league.[8]

At the time that she was studying at Vanderbilt, Brumfield, a Black woman who was in her early 30s, had worked in pastoral ministry in churches as well as in psychological counseling with adolescents. With a dual degree in psychology and communications from a major state university in Illinois, she was an experienced writer, a seasoned speaker, and a leader in the Black church. But even with all of these accomplishments under her

[8] Dawnn Marie Brumfield, personal email, 22 January 2015. Used with permission.

belt, she felt that she was way "out of her league" when it came to theological writing. The challenges of using academic jargon, of repeating her thesis and main points throughout a paper, and of communicating complex ideas were overwhelming for her. This is the experience of many students who are learning "an entirely new language for describing God," as Brumfield puts it.

Brumfield knew that she was intellectually capable of handling the demands at divinity school, so it was not her lack of ability that was hampering her. She reflects on her awareness of her position as a writer in the following way:

> For me, it wasn't a question of my intelligence. I had gotten into the program so I felt I certainly belonged there. But, it was as though I had missed the orientation for how to succeed in the world of theological writing in the academy. I graduated so I eventually got it together. Well, I got it together enough to graduate but it was hard work, indeed. I still write. I still read. Now, however, I am more confident that my writing fits the work that I do. I am a preacher. I am homiletician, that is. I preach. The people experience God in that way, too.[9]

Clearly, Brumfield felt empowered to be in an elite institution like Vanderbilt, but she lacked the linguistic, cultural, and educational background "to succeed in the world of theological writing in the academy." As a student, she had to figure out how to succeed in writing this new language to accomplish the goal of getting the degree.

At the same time, Brumfield's ultimate goal was not to become a writer of academic theology. She wanted to deepen her understanding of Christian belief and experience and to sharpen her tools for sharing the life of faith with others, but not within an academic setting, ultimately. Her focus was and always has been on pastoral settings in churches and the community. In this way, she is a good example of many students in theological education in the twenty-first century who want to develop intellectual and other resources in order to better serve their faith communities and the world, but who are

[9] Brumfield, personal email dated January 22, 2015.

not planning to focus on academic writing and research in the future. For Brumfield and others like her, "the people experience God in that way, too"—meaning that God is experienced not only in academic writing but also in the carrying out of a pastoral call to ministry through preaching and other service.

W. Justin Ilboudo ~ With the Help of Others I Try To Catch It

A current student in the Master of Theology program at Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry, W. Justin Ilboudo, SJ, hails from Burkina Faso, a French-speaking nation in West Africa. As a Jesuit studying to become a priest, Ilboudo comes to graduate theological studies with a strong academic background, having achieved degrees in literature and philosophy in minor seminary and in public law during graduate school in his home country, a bachelor in philosophy in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a master in litigation and arbitration in Cameroon, and another bachelor in theology in Ivory Coast. An experienced lawyer who has worked extensively with refugees and other dispossessed persons in various African nations in conflict, Ilboudo arrived in the United States to study theology with significant abilities in French and English as well as in biblical and ancient languages. He also has a number of academic publications under his belt.

Still, despite his vast experience and education, Ilboudo faced trepidation about studying theology in English. He describes his experience this way:

> I believe each language has its taste. I come from a French-speaking country and it is at my secondary school I had contact with English. After the difficulties of the beginning, I started enjoying my second language. In my minor seminary, we used to attend mass every Wednesday in English. English was tasty. It was there that I started dreaming to read the word of God in that language. Later, I managed to give evidence to my superiors that I have capacities to study theology in English. It was an opportunity to enter into the world of Newman, Martin Luther

> King and many other famous people whose translated works in French are far less powerful. It was also for me the possibility to get away from my "world", to visit another linguistic "world" and experience both the riches and the limits of languages to say realities pertaining to God. One year ago, my superiors granted my wish. Then I started trembling at the prospect to write all my exams in English. My path to my dream began in fears but with the help of others I try to catch it.[10]

Graduate study of theology in English might have been a dream for Ilboudo, but the reality of living into that dream was scary.

Having found English to be "tasty" from an early age, Ilboudo longed to study about God in English and eagerly embraced the opportunity to read some of his favorite theological writers in their first language. He reveals a high level of understanding about the difference in linguistic "worlds," as he puts it, in coming to the United States to study in English after having lived all over Africa and worked in French in other cultures with different dialects. Even with this critical awareness, Ilboudo was "trembling" at the idea of writing exams in English and recognized his fear as he anticipated the work. He says, though, that it is "with the help of others" that he is trying to live out his dream of studying theology in English.

It is Ilboudo's last phrase, "with the help of others I try to catch it," that signals one of the primary themes of this dissertation: the importance of understanding writing as a relational practice that requires guidance from more experienced writers. In the case of theological writing, it is experienced theological writers who must guide students as they try to catch their dreams. Students, particularly those from educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds that differ greatly from the dominant academic writing culture in United States theological education, need this help in bridging from their own experience and education to the one they are seeking in the United States. It is up to those of us who

[10] W. Justin Ilboudu, personal email dated April 15, 2015. Used with permission.

are theological educators to offer them the help they seek so that they can catch their dreams of becoming ministers, religious educators, pastoral caregivers, human rights lawyers, and more.

III. *Clashing Cultures: Students from Non-Dominant Backgrounds Writing in the Dominant Language of the Academy*

Neither Segura nor Chalmers nor Brumfield nor Ilboudo demonstrates a lack of intellectual ability or inexperience in good higher education contexts, yet they all expended an unusual amount of energy struggling in writing in theological education within the United States. Why? Because none of them was prepared to write in the ways demanded by theological education in this context. Some educators propose that the solution to dealing with writing problems like those of Segura, Chalmers, Brumfield, and Ilboudo is to avoid the problems altogether by raising the required grade point averages and/or test scores in order to keep sub-standard writers out. This kind of pre-emptive academic evaluation of these students, though, would keep out many fine students who can succeed in a system with a different pedagogy of writing. The students whom I have known and worked with were and are intellectually capable of thinking academically, but they have needed a different way of learning to write in order to make the most of their efforts in academia. Rather than rigidly excluding students like these from the communities of higher learning at Vanderbilt University and Boston College and other theological institutions, our theological schools must examine our institutions' pedagogies in writing and develop better ways to teach them. My own work with students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds is only the tip of the

iceberg in terms of the students who would benefit if the needed pedagogical shift were made.

The theological schools that educate and form our lay and ordained ministers for leadership and work in the church and the world continue to employ models of writing assignments (the twenty-page argumentative essay, for example) and expectations for graduate student writers (who should already be able to write the twenty-page essay) that are rooted in institutional, ecclesial, and societal realities that existed before the 1970s. The lack of change in our assignments and expectations has many sources, one of which is the fact that our teaching is tied to the ways that we were taught, and we were taught to be particular kinds of writers. Essentially, most professors teach writing the way that we learned while studying for doctoral degrees, for we have not reflected on the writing pedagogies used in our own educations or on what those writing pedagogies aimed to develop in us. Theological educators often assume that the way we were taught to write is the only way or the best way. This dissertation claims that this is not the case.

In theological schools in the United States, we privilege one language, educational history, and culture, even as our students arrive speaking many different languages, having had many different educational experiences, and representing many different cultures. Students and faculty in North American theological schools of the twenty-first century still adhere to a long tradition of speaking and writing in a dominant form of English alone, no matter where we hail from in terms of language or culture. This is not, in and of itself, a negative thing: we need a point of linguistic unity—a common language—so that expectations are clear and we are striving toward understanding each other even if we do not always agree. At the same time, the hegemony of academic

English in the American context brings with it many unexamined presuppositions about the "right" way to do things in theological education. This high register of English as the primary academic language does not exist in a vacuum but, instead, exists in relation to a complex set of educational, cultural and political ideas that grant social and intellectual power to certain groups of English speakers and writers while diminishing the social and intellectual power of others.

Historically, the command of English in schools in the United States has been connected to the official language of the nation-state, to the economic success of Western capitalism, and the social, political, and economic dominance of White heterosexual men in the United States. Those who have willingly moved to these shores from all over the world since the creation of the nation have been encouraged, if not required, to assimilate to English to succeed. Those who were here prior to the arrival of English settlers have been forced to assimilate linguistically to survive. Those who were forced to move here as a result of the slave trade were compelled to speak English by their White masters. And schools of all levels in the United States have reinforced—and sometimes carried out with violent force—the assimilation project involved in making English first and only as our public language.

Theological schools, as part of the overall educational landscape of the nation, have continued to privilege hegemonic academic English while requiring or strongly encouraging their students to study the biblical languages, particularly Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and, for those intent on further academic study, to acquire German or French to demonstrate facility with other scholarly languages. Although we encourage learning these other languages, we require students to present what they have learned in academic

English alone. The primary means of communicating in most class discussions and lectures and in written assignments in theological education has remained a particularly formal and elite dialect of English communicated in a high academic register. Students who do not conform to this communication approach often do not fare as well in their grades, in overall evaluations of their thinking, and in assessments of their potential contributions to the church and the world.

As theological institutions continue the practice of insisting on this particular form of writing in English, we are requiring not only a working vocabulary and understanding of academic syntax, but also a set of cognitive structures tied to a particular way of thinking and to a particular set of culturally-backed assumptions. Language, after all, is not only about words and sentences, but is also about how we capture our thoughts in words and express them to our fellow human beings in a way that effectively communicates ideas to them. As Helen Fox, a composition theorist and linguist, writes in her book *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing* (1994), "the dominant communication style and world view of the U.S. university, variously known as 'academic argument,' 'analytical writing,' 'critical thinking,' or just plain 'good writing,' is based on assumptions and habits of mind that are derived from western—or more specifically U.S.—culture."[11] Because academic writing is connected to a specific culture and way of doing and thinking about things, it is not neutral or value-free but emerges from a particular social intersection, with its values and assumptions.

Academic institutions expect students to write using this particular form of English as if it were the only or the best way to communicate ideas. But is it? Fox states

[11] Helen Fox, *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing* (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1994), xxi.

about writing in American higher education, "this way of thinking and communicating is considered the most sophisticated, intelligent, and efficient by only a tiny fraction of the world's peoples."[12] In fact, our approach is a way of thinking and writing theologically that has been developed in a context of White hegemony and patriarchy that has historically given the most access to learning how to do such writing and thinking to elite, White, English-speaking men, reducing a naturally diverse Christian community of thinkers, writers, and communicators to a much more homogenous group who have developed a type of academic mono-voice that is now the ideal and expected way of writing in theological education. The mono-voice is being challenged by and must give way to multiple voices, for the future of theological education is tied to ever-greater diversity in our student bodies.

IV. *Increasing Diversity in Theological Education in the Twenty-first Century*

What Segura, Chalmers, Brumfield, and Ilboudo voice for theological educators is that capable, brilliant students struggle with writing in ways that we have not fully examined and understood. And they are part of a larger trend toward greater diversity in theological education that is connected to shifts in larger demographic patterns in the United States,[13] and this cultural, linguistic, and educational change renders untenable simple repetitions of past pedagogical practices, especially in writing. While some

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[12] Fox, *Listening to the World*, xxi.

[13] For example, the Center for Public Education reports in "The United States of Education: The Changing Demographics of the United States and Their Schools" (2012) that "We are becoming more diverse. Trends in immigration and birth rates indicate that soon there will be no majority racial or ethnic group in the United States—no one group that makes up more than fifty percent of the total population. Already almost one in ten U.S. counties has a population that is more than fifty percent minority. Eight counties reached that status in 2006, bringing the total to 303 of the nation's 3,141 counties." See http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/You-May-Also-Be-Interested-In-landing-page-level/Organizing-a-School-YMABI/The-United-States-of-education-The-changing-demographics-of-the-United-States-and-their-schools.html. Accessed May 4, 2015.

educators argue that getting "better" students who can write without difficulties will return us to an imagined golden age of academic writing and learning, their solution simply does not address the reality of what is happening in theological education and United States higher education in general: more and more students are coming from educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds that are very different from what was the typical background of theology students until the 1970s.[14] The "better" students we are looking for are often exceptional students for whom academic writing in English is not easy because they do not have the background in it.

What this means in terms of writing is that theological educators simply cannot assume that all graduate student writers today are prepared in the same ways that past graduate student writers were prepared to write. There are many reasons why theology graduate students struggle academically, including, amongst other reasons, economic pressures that force them to work while in school, limiting the time and energy they have for studying, and familial responsibilities for children and aging parents, which also absorb students' attention and sometimes conflict with class meeting times and deadlines. However, the focus in this dissertation is on students' struggles with writing due to the

[14] Ruben G. Rumbaut and Douglas S. Massey write in "Immigration and Language Diversity in the United States" (2013) that "The revival of mass immigration after 1970 spurred a revival of linguistic diversity in the United States and propelled the nation back toward its historical norm. The postwar period in which older white Americans came of age was likely the most linguistically homogenous era in U.S. history. Compared to what came before and after, however, it was an aberration. The collective memory of those who grew up between 1944 and 1970 thus yields a false impression of linguistic practice in America. From a low of 4.7% in 1970, the percentage of foreign born rose steadily to reach 12.9% in 2010, much closer to its historic highs" (Rumbaut and Massey, 1). Today's linguistic landscape is very diverse and includes a large percentage of the U.S. population. According to the United States Census Bureau's report "Language Use in the United States: 2011," out of a total population of 320.1 million, over 60 million U.S. citizens speak a language other than English in the home, including Spanish (37.6 million), Chinese (2.9 million), Tagalog, a Filipino language (1.6 million), Vietnamese (1.4 million), French (1.3 million), Korean (1.1 million), German (1 million), Arabic (950,000), Russian (906,000), and French Creole (754,000). See Table 1 on pages 2-3 of "Language Use in the United States: 2011" from the United States Census Bureau at https//www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acs-22.pdf. Accessed December 29, 2014.

gap between their cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds and theological educators' narrow and hegemonic expectations for student writers. Not all students struggle with writing, but many tell stories like those of Segura, Chalmers, Brumfield, and Ilboudo, all of whom successfully navigated the challenges of theological writing with a lot of hard work and significant assistance in settings where old ideas about good writing as a product—and good writers idealized as a particular kind of student—still prevail.

Those of us who teach and lead in theological education must strive to include the diversity of students by teaching writing differently for three major reasons. First, it is a practical matter to welcome and assist those who represent the growing edge of student enrollments, as the number of students coming into theological education in the United States from non-dominant backgrounds is only going to increase as we move into the twenty-first century. Not making space for them is not an option if we want to keep the doors of our institutions open. Second, we must find more adequate ways to include these diverse students because not doing so is an ethical problem. Students who come from socio-economic, racial/ethnic, national, or other backgrounds that have historically been excluded from higher education must have access to theological education rather than excluded from it as we strive to enact justice. Third, our non-White, non-male, international, and second language learners are part of a church that has historically needed persons with a variety of gifts. The Pauline vision of the church is a body with many members or parts, all of whom are indispensable due to the talents and skills that they bring to the community. The rapidly changing church at sea in the tumultuous twenty-first century needs all hands and feet on deck; it is a theological good to make

space for the variety of gifts of all sorts of ministers so that they can be cultivated during theological study and then shared with the Christian community and in wider society.

Past and Current Enrollment Data

To achieve the practical, ethical, and theological goods of including diverse students more fully in theological education by supporting their transformation in and through writing, we must know more about the students who are coming to study with us. Knowledge about current student bodies and the trends in enrollment can be found by analyzing data generated by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the accrediting institution governing theological schools in North America. The ATS polls their member institutions in the United States and Canada to find out details about student enrollment numbers, amongst a host of other information. The data gleaned from ATS data tables from 1970-2013 offers theological educators a glimpse at patterns of enrollment over the last forty years or so and provides a snapshot of our student bodies today. What we see in the data is that student bodies have become increasingly diverse since 1970 and appear to be likely to continue on that track.

The table on the next page uses data from ATS fact books and annual data tables from 1970 to 2013 and represents a compilation of data from these various records. What it shows is that the student bodies of theological institutions are shifting in racial/ethnic diversity, which signals a change in the in the social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of our students. This more general data pointing to student diversity has been highlighted because the ATS does not provide data on linguistic or national differences in enrolled theology students, which is information that would be helpful in a study such as this one.

Because ATS has not kept specific data about students' linguistic heritages, it is impossible to know exactly how many students are bilingual or multilingual or come from smaller dialect communities within the United States. But we do know that students from national, racial/ethnic, linguistic, or educational backgrounds that are not centered in the United States academy and/or hegemonic academic culture may not be experienced writers in the dominant academic English employed in our universities and schools of theology. Despite having only partial data, this table gives us some evidence of the changing demographics of student bodies within theological education and can help us by shedding some light on various language-learning differences that White-dominant institutions have not fully taken into account when considering pedagogical matters regarding writing.

The trend in the demographic composition of student bodies in theological education along racial/ethnic lines is obvious when looking at this table: there has been growing diversification in the student bodies at theological institutions over the last forty years. Take, for example, the year 1972, when about 96% of the 33,036 students enrolled in the 189[15] ATS member theological institutions were White. At that time, ATS did not keep data on Asian, Native American, or International (also called Visa or Non-resident) students. In 1972, Black students represented only 3.2% of the student bodies and Hispanic students less than 1%. Students who were from non-dominant cultures, languages, and educational backgrounds in North America represented just over 4% of the total student enrolment in 1972. This has changed markedly since then.

[15] See Appendix A, *ATS Membership Changes,* for a discussion of the numbers and kinds of institutions holding membership in the ATS.

TABLE 1
Head Count Enrollment by Race or Ethnic Group, All Degrees & Genders, 1970-2013
All ATS Schools in USA and Canada[16]

Race/Ethnic Group[17]	1970	1972	1978	1980	2006	2013
Asian	Unavailable	Unavailable	499 (1.1%)	602 (1.2%)	5,370 (6.6%)	5,756 (8%)
Black	808 (2.6% of total)	1,061 (3.2%)	1,919 (4.1%)	2,205 (4.4%)	8,344 (10.3%)	9,325 (12.9%)
Hispanic	Unavailable	264 (.8%)	681 (1.5%)	894 (1.8%)	3,104 (3.8%)	3,789 (5.2%)
Native American	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	64 (.1%)	312 (.4%)	288 (.4%)
White	30,264 (97.4%)	31,711 (96%)	41,854 (90.1%)	44,298 (89.4%)	48,236 (59.5%)	39,713 (54.9%)
Visa/International/Non-Resident	Unavailable	Unavailable	1,507 (3.2%)	1,548 (3.1%)	6,104 (7.5%)	6,319 (8.7%)
Not Reported	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	9,593 (11.9%)	7,188 (9.9%)
Total	31,072	33,036	46,460	49,611	81,063	72,387
# Schools Reporting	179	189	193	197	253	267

Today, students from non-dominant backgrounds represent about 35% of the student bodies in theological education. In 2013-2014, the most recent year available, 267 ATS schools reported that the percentage of White students had dropped to only 55% of those enrolled. That same year, almost 13% of students were Black, over 5% were Hispanic, almost 8% were Asian, over 8.5% were International, and a small fraction were Native American. What this demonstrates is a marked decrease in White students in relation to an overall increase in enrollment, which means that fewer and fewer students are coming from the dominant White North American cultural, educational, and linguistic

[16] See Appendix A at the end of the dissertation for a version of this table with complete footnotes indicating the source of each data set, explaining the gaps in the data, providing a rationale for the years chosen, and offering a brief interpretation of the data. Most of the footnotes were removed here for ease of reading.

[17] The labels used in this table to indicate race/ethnicity are those employed by the ATS in their fact books and data tables. See Appendix A for definitions of these terms, as employed by the ATS. All groups named indicate students from North America with the exception of Visa/International students.

background.[18] The students whose numbers are increasing include students like Segura, Brumfield, and Ilboudo, whose voices were introduced earlier.

These findings about the demographic shifts in the enrollments in theological institutions between 1970 and 2013 are echoed in a report from the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education, which uses the same ATS enrollment data in the table above to analyze trends from 1992 and 2011. Auburn researchers Barbara G. Wheeler, Anthony T. Ruger, and Sharon L. Miller, discuss the marked change in theological schools' student bodies in the 1990s and early 2000s in an online report, entitled "Theological Student Enrollment: A Special Report from the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education" (2013). The researchers' report shows that overall enrollment is now in decline and that the enrollment of White students is in steep decline while the enrollment of Black, Asian, and Hispanic students is on the rise in comparison.

First, with regard to the decline in overall enrollment, the researchers found that, after an enrollment peak the early 2000s, theological schools have since seen an overall decline.[19] Wheeler, Ruger, and Miller explain that the peak was due, in large part, to the "influx of women, especially older women, who came to seminary after mainline denominations began to ordain them in significant numbers and (later) when Roman Catholic and evangelical churches and agencies opened a wider range of ministries to women."[20] These are women like Chalmers, who returned to school as part of a career and vocation change. The following table, created for this dissertation, helps to illustrate

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[18] In fact, not all students who identify as White are from a dominant linguistic, cultural, or educational background, which means that, even amongst White students, there may also be diversity.
[19] Barbara G. Wheeler, Anthony T. Ruger, and Sharon L. Miller, "Theological Student Enrollment: A Special Report from the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education" (August 2013), 2. Accessed online December 29, 2014, http://www.auburnseminary.org/sites/default/files/Theological%20Student%20Enrollment-%20Final.pdf.
[20] Wheeler, Ruger, and Miller, "Theological Student Enrollment," 6.

this shift in the number of women in theological education from 1972, the first year available, to 2013:

TABLE 2
Head Count Enrollment by Gender, 1972-2013
All ATS Schools in USA and Canada[21]

Year of Enrollment→	**1972**[22]	**1978**	**2006**	**2009**	**2013**
Women	3,358 (10.2%)	8,972 (19.3%)	27,921 (34.4%)	26,034 (34.8%)	24,663 (34.1%)
Men	29,678 (89.8%)	37,488 (80.7%)	53,142 (65.6%)	48,730 (65.2%)	47,715 (65.9%)
Total	33,036	46,460	81,063	74,764	72,378

What this table shows is that the enrollment of women did, indeed, jump from just above 10% in 1972 to almost 35% at the peak of enrollment in 2006. The presence of women in growing numbers has meant a shift in the focus of vocational goals for which theological institutions are preparing students; for example, since women cannot be ordained within some denominations, women from these denominations prepare for ministry by focusing on lay leadership, spiritual direction, religious education, academic pursuits, and other ministerial paths that are not ordination track. Because women have been enrolling in theological education in greater numbers, at least until their peak in 2009, theological instutitions' cultures and curricula have had to change in various ways though there is still work to do.

Additionally, the Auburn researchers report that the enrollment of "non-white racial and ethnic groups," including the enrollment of students like Brumfield and Ilboudo, has had a notable upward impact upon enrollment levels as well.[23] Table 1 on

[21] See Appendix B at the end of this dissertation for detailed bibliographic information as well as a rationale for the selection of dates for this table.
[22] 1972 is the first year for which data on student gender is available.
[23] Wheeler, Ruger, and Miller, "Theological Student Enrollment," 6.

race and ethnicity confirms this finding. Thus, the inclusion of women and Asian, Black, and Hispanic students in theological education across the United States has helped to steadily increase enrollments from the 1970s through the early 2000s, a significant change that institutions must take into account when considering pedagogy and curriculum, including the nature and role of writing in theological education.

Despite this overall uptick in enrollment over the previous three decades, the numbers have not held in the 2010s. Wheeler and her collaborators found that the decrease in enrollment since the peak has been at the rate of one percent per year, which is the same rate at which the schools had increased from 1992 to the peak year.[24] The greatest decline in student enrollment has been in White students, particularly males, although head count enrollments of women students from all races and ethnic groups are also in decline.[25] However, not every population within the church and in theological education is on the decline. Wheeler, Ruger, and Miller write of the following trends:

> One demographic trend seems actually to draw new constituencies to theological education and holds promise to continue to do so in the future. Enrollments of African Americans, Hispanics and, to a lesser extent, Asians in theological schools continue to increase, mirroring the growth of those groups in the wider population.[26]

Thus, while White enrollments decrease, enrollments by people from other racial/ethnic groups increase, following larger societal demographic trends.

There are many possible reasons for these increases. The authors explain these upward trends in Black, Hispanic, and Asian student enrollments as follows:

> Rising African American enrollments probably reflect both rising educational expectations for ministry in black churches and a larger pool of college graduates eligible for further study. Hispanic and Asian enrollments are no doubt bolstered

[24] Wheeler, Ruger, and Miller, "Theological Student Enrollment," 2.
[25] Wheeler, Ruger, and Miller, "Theological Student Enrollment," 19.
[26] Wheeler, Ruger, and Miller, "Theological Student Enrollment," 21.

> by immigration, and in the case of Hispanics, the fastest growing sector in undergraduate education, educational advances play a role as well.[27]

It seems that, as these groups attend college and participate more robustly in middle class life in the United States, they also eventually attend graduate school—including theological education—in greater numbers. As United States society itself becomes more diversified, we might expect continued increases in attendance in theological institutions on the part of students from Black, Asian, and Hispanic backgrounds.

In addition, International student diversity is growing in theological education as it is for other institutions within North American higher education. Table 1 reports the ATS data that, as of 2013, theological education had 6,319 international students in a total student population of 72,387 in member schools in the United States and Canada. This is an increase from the first reported numbers available from the ATS—1,507 students in 1978. Thus, in 2013, international students like Segura and Ilboudo formed 8.7% of all students in theological education in North America, an increase from 3.2% of the total student enrollment in the 1978 enrollment data.

Along with Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American students, these International students formed almost 35% of ATS school enrollments in 2013-2014. This so-called "minority" group is surely growing and, someday, will be the majority group in theological education in the United States. With these students come a wide range of languages, cultural experiences, intellectual predispositions, and educational backgrounds, which United States theological institutions have not fully appreciated. This lack of preparedness for the future is especially significant in the realm of writing, on which hang performances and evaluations of most students' academic work.

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[27] Wheeler, Ruger, and Miller, "Theological Student Enrollment," 21.

What the Future Holds for Theological Education

While keeping in mind current theology student writers, it is also crucial for us to consider more fully and plan for these future students in theological education in the United States. Thinking together about a future of greater diversity helps us remember why it matters for us to act in a responsive and responsible manner now. What is likely to happen is that theological educators may not find that the dips in enrollment numbers continue as our society continues to grow and diversify through birth and immigration. One way for us to prepare for change on an even larger scale is to know more about the student writers we will likely be teaching five, fifteen, and fifty years from now.

Researchers have discovered that enrollment in graduate education is healthy, and they project that it will remain so. For example, recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the United States Department of Education shows that graduate education in the United States is stable and will continue to grow. In a 2012 report entitled "Postbaccalaureate Enrollment," NCES researchers found that there are currently 1.6 million full time postbaccalaureate students and 1.3 million part time students.[28] Based on the trajectory of change the researchers have been tracking, they expect full time graduate level enrollment to increase 26% between 2010 and 2023 and part time enrollments to increase 24% in that same time span.[29] This suggests that graduate education, on the whole, is likely to continue to grow with more students progressing from undergraduate programs into further studies. Despite researchers' concerns about declining enrollments in theological education, it may be that these declines are only temporary and will be reversed as the United States' current population

[28] "Postbaccalaureate Enrollment," National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education. May 2014. Accessed 19 January 2015. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_chb.asp.
[29] Postbaccalaureate Enrollment," National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education.

and immigration numbers shift and people coming from more religious backgrounds outside and within the United States are attracted to theological education.

Additionally, not all analysts of theological education have been oblivious to the changing situation of increased diversity in theological education. Many, including theological educator and writing teacher Lucretia Yaghjian, whose research has been supported by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, have been arguing for theological education to be more responsive to our changing student bodies. These researchers advocate institutional change based on what they are seeing in society and our schools. Indeed, the ATS's executive director, Daniel O. Aleshire, charts the 30-year increase in Asian, Black, Hispanic, and International students in theological education and the ATS's various responses to these changes. In "Gifts Differing: The Educational Value of Race and Ethnicity" (2009), he writes that

> 35 percent of the student population of ATS member schools is racial/ethnic, if international students are included […]. By midcentury, white will no longer be a racial majority in the United States, which is already the case in several population centers. The pastors who will lead congregations through this cultural shift are in our schools now. The future of the North American church and theological schools is dependent, in part, on our getting race and ethnicity right.[30]

If Aleshire and his colleagues on the ATS's Committee on Race and Ethnicity in Theological Education are correct, and the research shared here indicates that they are, then theological educators have a lot of work ahead of us to "get race and ethnicity right." This includes our getting our curricula and pedagogies right, especially when it comes to writing projects for diverse students in theological education.

To emphasize the importance of getting our approach to diversity right, Aleshire asserts that there are several crucial reasons for theological educators and our institutions

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[30] Daniel O. Aleshire, "Gifts Differing: The Educational Value of Race and Ethnicity" in *Theological Education* 45.1 (2009), 4.

to address issues that come with changing racial/ethnic and cultural diversity in our schools. He writes:

> One is that an important understanding of our faith is justice, and racial/ethnic groups have had far less of it in North America than whites have had. Another is about institutional survival. North America is on its way to a kind of racial plurality that has never existed before. If theological schools don't learn how to be effective educational institutions for racially and culturally diverse students and effective theological institutions for the communities they will serve, they will simply waste away as viable institutions by the end of this century.[31]

From the perspectives of justice and practicality, it is imperative that we attend to the issues of diversity in theological education.

It is also crucial to recognize the gift in diversity, which is understood within the Christian community to be a positive aspect of Christian life and witness. Along with the practical reasons for embracing diversity and the commitment to justice, this sense of diversity as a gift reminds theological educators that including a wide range of students will benefit not only all of our students, but also churches, wider society, and academic institutions, too. In attending to the needs of diverse learners in writing and other aspects of theological education, not only are theological educators responding to the multilingual, multicultural, and non-traditional educational reality of students in our current context, but we are also responding to the historical reality of the Christian community, which has been composed of many peoples and expressed itself in many tongues since the time of the early church. The Christian community needs well-educated and well-formed ministers to serve in a wide range of communities, bringing to life the inclusion of many gifts and many peoples in our shared life of faith.

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[31] Aleshire, "Gifts Differing," 2.

V. *Exposing the Gap: Changing Student Demographics and Theological Institutions' Slow Responses*

In order to meet our current and future students where they are and help them succeed, theological educators must move away from older, static understandings of student writers, student writing, and the role of writing in the theological curriculum. But faculty and our institutions are not changing—at least, we are not changing fast enough. One of the precipitating issues that makes a dissertation like this necessary is the slowness of theological institutions to respond in relation to changes in the backgrounds, needs, and goals of our student bodies. The unhurried pace of change in our institutions comes from a variety of factors, including the complexity of higher education institutions today, which act more like large, ocean-going vessels that need a wide berth and lots of time in order to turn rather than like nimble, flexible sailboats able to adjust quickly to any nautical event. Another reason for the lack of change in theological pedagogy is the tense relationship and lack of creative responsiveness between United States higher education and the general public. This energy-sapping conflict is fueled, on the one hand, by the public's anti-intellectualism combined with a popular suspicion of colleges and universities as an "Ivory Tower" that does not understand what is "really going on" in society due to its perceived distance from "real life." On the other hand, this disjunction is caused by academic elitism and, on the part of some scholars, an unwillingness to be held publicly accountable for our research and activities, as if we "know better" than everyone else how our common life should look.

Yet another, even more important, reason why pedagogical invention in theological education is retarded has to do with our own educations as scholars, which has trained us to write in certain ways. We are stuck in patterns of following particular

pedagogical models, which, according to theologian and retired Vanderbilt Divinity School professor Edward Farley, "originated in the course of study and graduate programs of the teachers," meaning that we use pedagogies with our theology and ministry students that were used to train us in doctoral research programs.[32] We continue, sometimes unthinkingly, to employ these known approaches to teaching and learning because they worked for us in our doctoral training, but we are not entirely aware of whether these methods work for our students or not. Even if we are aware of our pedagogical methods as theological educators, we can find ourselves caught in "a deep rift between theology as an academic or scholarly discipline (science?) and the situations and interests of students," as Farley describes it.[33] Students' struggles with writing help us see that theological educators and students are caught in a gap between academic theological study and the practical and pastoral goals of most students.

The snail's pace of addressing this gap as has been documented by researchers involved in long-term study of this issue of change within our educational institutions. For example, in an article published in a 2011 issue of the journal *Theological Education,* entitled "The Future Has Arrived: Changing Theological Education in a Changed World," Daniel O. Aleshire says this about institutional change:

> ATS schools have not been asleep at the switch, but the world around them has changed faster and perhaps more pervasively than the schools have. Schools have adapted practices and modified structures, but ultimately, realities beyond the schools will require even more fundamental shifts in institutions' form and educational character.[34]

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[32] Edward Farley, "Four Pedagogical Mistakes: A *Mea Culpa*," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 8.4 (2005), 200.
[33] Farley, "Four Pedagogical Mistakes," 200.
[34] Daniel O. Aleshire, "The Future Has Arrived: Changing Theological Education in a Changed World," *Theological Education* 46.2 (2011), 73.

In Aleshire's assessment, theological schools have been slow to respond to larger societal change despite some efforts to do so. We must become more rapidly responsive to the changes both within and outside of ourselves or risk being obsolete. To make the shift will require structural change in our institutions as well as in the development and adoption of new practices for individual courses.[35]

Some theological educators and researchers assert that it is not only the larger institutional structures that must change, but also faculties themselves must change despite reluctance. Three researchers from the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education have found a long-term pattern of reticence within faculties to address diversity issues in a comprehensive manner. In a report for the Auburn Center, entitled "Signs of the Times: Present and Future Theological Faculty" (2005), Barbara G. Wheeler, Sharon L. Miller, and Katarina Schuth state that, while theological faculties and schools are stable institutions, they are very sluggish in their responses to changes in the surrounding environment. Like Aleshire, these three authors conclude that theological faculties

> are very slow to change. They do not adapt readily to shifts in the character of the student body or the way they are expected to teach. Some faculties have indeed incorporated new pedagogies and have learned to teach in new formats. Other institutions have made strides toward the goals of gender and racial diversity in their faculties as well as student bodies. But very few schools have been able to make progress on both fronts, even when they have set such changes as explicit goals.[36]

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[35] One of the ways that theological institutions might go about changing is to adopt an approach to teaching writing called "Writing Across the Curriculum." Developed by composition theorists and practitioners such as Toby Fulweiler, James Kinneavy, and Susan McLeod, this approach invites faculty to come together across disciplinary boundaries to examine the curriculum and writing pedagogy in order to create common writing goals across the curriculum and within degree programs. The bibliography at the end of this dissertation provides resources for enacting this approach. See also Chapter Five.

[36] Barbara G. Wheeler, Sharon L. Miller, and Katarina Schuth, entitled "Signs of the Times: Present and Future Theological Faculty" (Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education, 2005), 25. Accessed December 26, 2014, http://www.auburnseminary.org/sites/default/files/Signs%20of%20the%20Times.pdf.

The authors' assertion of faculties' lack of responsiveness to the shifting character of theological schools' student bodies, including a lack of pedagogical diversity at many schools, is amply demonstrated in the gap between many graduate students' writing abilities and faculty members' expectations of student writing.

This gap was reflected in the experience of a Japanese former student of mine, who struggled with his professor's requirements for a take-home exam. Never having been exposed to this kind of writing before, this exceptionally driven, intelligent student was confused by the assignment and went to see his professor for assistance. The student came to me after speaking with the professor, who had taken a good bit of time to discuss the exam with the student, giving him bibliographic resources and talking to him about the content of he exam. Despite the professor's generosity of time and intellectual resources, the student remained unsure of how to organize a take-home exam and still did not understand the scope of the writing assignment. The professor had not realized that the student's fundamental problem with the assignment was that it made no sense to him at all.

This student-faculty writing gap is caused partly because of this fact: Students, like my Japanese student, who come from diverse cultural, linguistic, familial, and educational backgrounds often struggle to write in the dominant academic style, which was developed by and for White men when they were the primary—and, indeed, almost the exclusive—participants in higher education and theological education. While few researchers have examined the writing gap, some have written about the gaps in

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While the researchers' data focuses on faculty trends from 1993 to 2003 in theological education, their summary remains relevant in 2015. They support their claims with data from the ATS student enrollment reports and from their extensive study of demographic information on faculty garnered through questionnaires solicited from full-time faculty in the member institutions of the ATS and doctoral students studying to teach religion and theology.

theological education more generally. For example, Gary Riebe-Estrella writes in "Engaging Borders: Lifting Up Difference and Unmasking Division" (2009):

> [T]he institutional culture [of theological education] remains one that privileges those whose ethnic cultures gave it birth and who have held the power to maintain their dominance, making the educational enterprise fundamentally reflective of that same group. The fact that our schools and classrooms make only superficial accommodations for those who are different racially and culturally, rather than entertain radical change, clearly reveals that these differences are understood by the dominant group as divisions, because what reflects the world of the dominant group is considered normative, while what is different is considered as peripheral and of less value.[37]

Here, Riebe-Estrella is describing the gap between the dominant cultural-linguistic paradigm within theological education, which privileges a certain register of English, and our own students' cultural-linguistic paradigms, which may or may not include sufficient learning in dominant English. This is much like Helen Fox's description of the difference between student's communication styles and the "dominant communication style and world view"[38] in *Listening to the World*. While we may want to continue to privilege English for many reasons, there is a need to help students bridge between these two worlds.

Riebe-Estrella's observation clarifies for us some of the current tensions in the institutional situation of theological education by noting that the dominant group and its practices are seen as normative in theological education while the student body is in flux. In general, it is the case that what is currently considered normative in terms of student writing in theological education is the a linear, spare kind of writing that is centered on a specific, identifiable thesis, which is expected from White males who have attended elite undergraduate institutions within the United States, where they have learned to produce

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[37] Gary Riebe-Estrella, "Engaging Borders: Lifting Up Difference and Unmasking Division" in *Theological Education* 45.1 (2009), 21.
[38] Fox, *Listening to the World*, xxi.

such writing. What is not normative is the writing of students who are not White, not male, not privileged, not native English speakers, and, in some cases, are not from the United States, whose writing styles may be grounded in narrative, contain digressions, and/or lack a single thesis. However, what must happen is not only that theological educators must make an effort to bridge between these different styles; we must also try to shift our expectations of normativity within higher education to include the gifts that our students bring with them. Students who are from what have historically been non-dominant groups and have been marginalized are going to be dominant in our student bodies by the end of the twenty-first century.

While our student bodies have changed dramatically since the 1970s, theological educators' pedagogical expectations and methods of teaching writing have not changed enough in response, as we continue to assign papers with little guidance for students in how to write them. Faculty members and administrators in theological institutions are primarily concerned with students' preparation for and demonstration of graduate level writing, but we must also consider the possibility of teaching writing as a process instead of product. We must teach theological writing in such a way that recognizes the challenges faced by our changing and diverse student bodies, that helps our students to better understand us, and that enables them to enact the changes in their writing that we and they believe they need to make. We must also teach writing in a way that connects students with the communities they hope to serve and the lives of faith that they lead. Just as students must adapt to the institutions where they choose to study, so theological faculties must adapt to the rich diversity of students who arrive to learn and then leave to minister, teach, and work in churches and wider society. It is part of our mission as

theological institutions to prepare students for the vocations they are called to in the church an the world, and the ways we teach writing can assist students as they transform themselves into these kinds of ministers.

VI. *Closing the Gap: Students' Challenges & Educators' Approaches in Writing*

In order to adjust to what is happening with our students, theological educators must understand and respond to some of the challenges that today's student writers of theology face. These demographic changes in our student bodies have significant effects on variation in student writing, but it is difficult to negotiate the gap caused by the static normativity of dominant academic English and the rapidity of the changing cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds of students. Students from diverse, non-dominant backgrounds face five key challenges when they write theologically in theological schools, and these can help theological educators consider how best to respond pedagogically.

1. *Writing as an Enculturation Process*

First, students face the challenge of enculturation into academic life, including writing. Thus, faculty and students must understand that students' academic writing is part of a larger, transformative learning process that theological education is leading them through.

Students whose first or primary language is not English as well as students who come from different educational and cultural backgrounds within English-speaking communities experience what theological educator and composition theorist Lucretia Yaghjian calls a "Copernican shift" as they transition into writing theology in academic

English.[39] Yaghjian says that this massive shift is, in part, cultural, as a person "relinquishes [her/his] own language and culture as the center of the universe."[40] For those who have not formally studied theology in English in the United States context before or who have not studied theology before, learning theology is, as Segura, Chalmers, Brumfield, and Ilboudo point out, like learning another language. Writing theology in academic English "opens the learner to new worlds" while also having "the potential to change the learner's world."[41] This transformation, while invigorating and broadening, can also be troublesome and painful and can sap students' energy and keep them from deeper learning. It is certainly a process that professors must help students move through.

Essentially, learning to write and think theologically in English is akin to an enculturation process that involves stages of shock, rejection, accommodation, and fluency with this new theological language.[42] Students may or may not be quite brilliant in their first languages, in their cultures of origin, and/or in the original fields in which they studied, but, regardless of their past accomplishments or failures, they often experience these stages of transformation in a non-linear, recursive, and sometimes unpredictable fashion as they write their assignments for their theology classes. An accomplished White pediatrician from Tennessee may hit a wall in her first church history course; an experienced Chilean policy analyst may resort to child-like sentence structures for a paper on Christology; a well-respected Black poet from California may

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[39] Lucretia B. Yaghjian, Chapter 13, "Writing Theology Well in a New Language: Rhetorics of Communication, Enculturation, and Empowerment," in *Writing Theology Well*, 2nd ed. (London/New York: Bloomsbury/T.T. Clark, forthcoming fall 2015), 7. Used with permission.
[40] Yaghjian, "Writing Theology Well in a New Language," 7.
[41] Yaghjian, "Writing Theology Well in a New Language," 7.
[42] Yaghjian, "Writing Theology Well in a New Language," 7-8.

fail to find the words she needs to write her first lengthy argumentative essay on theological anthropology. For these students, grappling with the shifts and shocks of writing theology in academic English for a professor is part of learning to do theology well. Students are constructing their theologies in the process of learning how to write theology in academic English. Faculty can help students face these writing challenges by helping them understand the process of enculturation they are experiencing so that students can engage with awareness in and through that process.

2. *Understanding the Dominant Academic Writing Style*

Second, students do not always come to coursework with an awareness of the peculiar requirements of our dominant academic writing style. Thus, faculty must help these students come to grips with the hegemonic English used within the academy in the United States, as this assistance will help students do well in their theology courses. It will also help them learn what this approach to doing theology has to teach them.

Helen Fox describes the dominant academic writing style in American higher education as one that is very direct, thesis-driven, analytical, and logically structured in which "the argument should sound assertive and confident" while at the same time being "to the point, without irrelevant digressions" and using a tone that is "polite and reasonable rather than strident or badgering."[43] This is in contrast to many other styles of academic writing around the world, which are often more like indirect persuasion bent on harmonious expressions of shared knowledge rather than argumentative assertions of individual insight.[44] Students coming from writing traditions that are non-Western and/or

[43] Fox, *Listening to the World*, 12.
[44] See Fox, *Listening to the World*, Chapter 3, p. 29-44.

are not part of the mainstream academic writing tradition in North American higher education do not automatically realize that these differences exist, and their writing often shows it.

What theological educators can help students see are the basic expectations of academic writing in English in the United States as well as the expectations that the students themselves bring to the table. Using Fox's ideas in concert with her own observations of student writing over many years, Yaghjian distills these different academic writing styles into two very general categories, which are useful to a wide range of students. What Yaghjian calls "North American Writing Culture" contains these features: a direct, assertive rhetoric; the information spelled out by the writer for her audience; a lack of digressions and a preference for brevity; an individualistic writing voice with a focus on intellectual property; an emphasis on "original" writing in the writer's own words; a value of critiques of authoritative sources; and an understanding of academic writing as a gateway to academic success.[45] Yaghjian asserts that, in contrast, "Cross-Cultural Writing Cultures" contain the following features: an indirect and respectful rhetoric; assumptions that reader will understand encoded information; a preference for digressions as elaborative and descriptive; a collectivist writing voice with inclusion of traditional cultural words; the mimesis of authoritative writers; and an understanding of academic writing as an difficult obstacle on the way to academic achievement.[46] When students can identify the mixture of these expectations in their own approaches to writing—and when theological educators can do so as well—it becomes possible to help students learn the dominant writing culture and to make choices about

[45] Yaghjian, "Writing Theology Well in a New Language," 16.
[46] Yaghjian, "Writing Theology Well in a New Language,"16.

how they will adapt to it. It is also helpful for teachers and students to consider the value of both approaches and to recognize that writers all the time make decisions to privilege one form of writing or another based on their goals for the piece of writing. Theological educators must help students develop this ability to discern and make choices in their writing.

3. *Developing Relationships with Professors*

Third, as students take courses, they are not always sure how to relate to their professors, and writing is one of the areas in which they struggle to understand their professors as their audience. A faculty member can assist a student by guiding her/him in relating to the faculty as a whole and to the professor's particular expectations for her/his course.

Writing itself is not a solitary activity, as the next chapter argues. It involves a set of relationships with people as well as ideas and is, therefore, social. The social situation of students in United States theological schools, quite often, encourages them to assert themselves vocally and forcefully even though they do not hold power in relation to their professors, who set the terms of the syllabus and grade the students according to those terms. When students write, they are not always sure whom they are writing for. They wonder: Who is this professor? How authoritative will she/he be in demanding that I cover certain topics in a certain way? How accepting will she/he be when I do not communicate as expected in academic English? What happens if I make an error, God forbid, or say an heretical thing in an academic paper? Negotiating these questions about writing is a matter of negotiating the relationship each student has with his/her professors.

Additionally, students from non-North American cultures or from some immigrant cultures within the United States often do not understand academic conventions in relating to their professors outside of the classroom. This is especially true when those students come from more rigid learning cultures that encourage distance and quiet respect from students in relation to their faculty members. In these sorts of environments, students are not encouraged to visit professors' offices, to call professors by their first names, or to ask critical questions about how professors are teaching their courses. Understanding that it is acceptable to ask these kinds of questions, to show up during office hours, to admit to not understanding something covered in the class, or to call a professor by her or his first name is a challenge for some students. By becoming more aware of these cultural barriers to student-teacher interactions, theological educators can help students examine the barriers so that, together, they can drop these barriers in order to maximize students' learning while minimizing their anxiety in this new culture.

4. *Understanding Shifts in Theological Subject Matter*

Fourth, students may be interested in writing about theological issues or concerns about which professors have little knowledge or interest. But students may be identifying critical areas for analysis and reflection due to the diverse communities from which they come. As students write for their courses, they must become aware of the subject matter (content) of their writing in new ways, as all theology is not alike. Faculty must assist students with this process as well as educate themselves about new areas of study on the horizon.

An example of this process of a student coming to critical consciousness about the content of his subject matter is described well by a famous South African Anglican theologian, minister, and social justice activist who studied in a Western theological institution in England, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. In his Foreword to Denise M. Ackermann's *After the Locusts: Letters from a Landscape of Faith*, Tutu reflects as an elderly, retired Archbishop with a long view of theology, the academy, the church, and the world. Looking back on his academic preparation, he writes that, when he was a graduate student of theology in a British institution in the 1960s, he asked one of his professors about seeking a doctorate in Black theology and was rebuffed. His White professor, he says, "had the arrogance of one who expected everyone to know that there really was only one kind of theology and that was theology practised by himself and those like him, Caucasian and overwhelmingly male."[47] Black theology, in other words, was not acceptable subject matter for a "real" theologian. I know of current theology graduate students—including myself—who have faced this kind of response to our expression of areas of inquiry that we wanted to investigate because our ideas were not seen as legitimate.

As Tutu struggled to understand the limits of theological subject matter as they were set by the White establishment within Western theological institutions, he began to see how difficult his situation was and, at the same time, how important it was for him to write out of his own experience. The professor implicitly asserted to Tutu that there was no need to consider any other study of theology because it was dominated by one type of theological voice with a unified and correct set of concerns. Prior to the 1960s, Tutu says,

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[47] Tutu, Foreword, *After the Locusts: Letters from a Landscape of Faith* by Denise M. Ackermann (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), ix.

"there had been relative theological homogeneity" expressed by the similar voices of White males who dominated theology with a particular set of "thought forms, worldview, and point of reference" that included "communities that shared a great deal in common."[48] The sameness of the concerns of theological writers reflected their shared life experiences. While there might have been some slight differences in theological writers and their voices, "it could be said that they belonged under one class. Everything that did not fit this classification was an aberration and was ruled out of court in principle."[49] Regardless of the differences in the writers, even differences in race, nationality, and life experience, the theological narrative and the basic voice had to remain the same. Theology students were expected to reproduce the academic mono-voice.

As a result, Tutu began to see that White, elite, Western education did not have all the answers for him as a Black man from South Africa. He reflects on this realization, saying, "I am amazed at how easily I learnt splendid answers in England to questions no one in my black community was asking at home in South Africa."[50] Despite this poor match between Black South African concerns and White theology, the discourse that had been striving for theological sameness and universality slowly started to shift—as it continues to do today. Tutu notes, "It is very odd that it should have taken so long to establish the fact that an authentic and relevant theology by definition almost had to be particular, avoiding a premature and almost certainly invalid claim to universality like the plague."[51] Thus, the old idea that a singular theology could be the universal theology for

[48] Tutu, Foreword, ix.
[49] Tutu, Foreword, ix.
[50] Tutu, in Ackermann, x.
[51] Tutu, in Ackermann, ix.

all persons began to break apart and change as theologians, ministers, and parishioners recognized the complexity and multiplicity of Christian experience for individuals and communities and acknowledged that all Christian life was not alike.

These many voices of our students have to learn how to carry a theological discourse that asks questions that will matter to them and their communities of faith rather than answering questions no one is asking. Instead of teaching them one way to write or speak theologically, theological educators' task is to help students figure out how to speak and write about matters of spiritual, theological, and ethical concern in ways that both honor the ongoing discourse and each student's new voice within it. This idea is addressed in the next chapter.

5. *Becoming More Contextually Aware*

Fifth, and finally, students often arrive at school to study theology without a robust sense of their context of ministry or their context of study and the ways in which the two relate or fail to relate. Thus, faculty must assist them in understanding the context of their writing more thoroughly and in comparison/contrast to the context of their lives and ministries.

This contextual awareness is not just about content and is linked to all four of the other areas of challenge for students. Students must become aware of the context in which they are writing academically as well as the context about which they are thinking when they are doing theological writing because the gap between the two matters. Academic writing unfolds in a particular context, as this chapter has discussed, and it reflects certain kinds of power relations between students and their teachers as well as

students and the subject matter, which they may or may not know well. But students are not only preoccupied with their academic contexts as they write: they may also have in the back of their minds "the folks back home" to whom they may feel accountable. Their own theological questions arise from the contexts in which they have grown up and to which they will return as ministers, activists, pastoral caregivers, and so forth. Just as Tutu, coming from a context of strictly enforced apartheid, was not asking the same questions as his White professors were, so our students may be asking different questions that have arisen from their own contexts and from their relationships within those contexts. Our students are trying to develop and answer theological questions in ways that make sense in those contexts. The questions for us as theological educators are, How are we going to help them ask and answer their own contextual questions in a way that we and others will understand? How can they write in theological education so that their writing will matter for the contexts in which they intend to minister? How can we assist them in constructing voices so they can be heard not only within the academy, but also in the church and the world?

VII. *Answering the Questions: A Road Map to the Dissertation*

If this chapter has generated questions for consideration, the next chapters of this dissertation offer some partial answers. A significant way that theological educators can begin to attend to the issues raised here is at the level of pedagogy—specifically, by examining writing pedagogy and developing people- and process-oriented approaches that will help close the gap for students from non-dominant cultural, educational, and linguistic backgrounds. The full rationale for this particular approach should become

clearer over the next four chapters, but suffice it to say for the moment that the choice to focus on writing is because doing so can help us respond vigorously to who students are, where they come from, how they relate to ideas and people, who they hope to become, and what they hope to do in their lives and ministries. Good writing practices for diverse students learning hegemonic academic culture and language can help to shape them as thinkers, leaders, and ministers of all kinds who are ready to tackle the challenges faced by the church, academy, and society in the century to come.

In the next chapter of this dissertation, Chapter Two, the focus is on developing a robust definition of the writer's voice for theological writing using insights from Aristotelian rhetorical theory, contemporary composition studies, and Bakhtinian linguistic theory. In this second chapter, writing is defined as a social activity in which a writer constructs a voice or voices in order to communicate with an audience or audiences. Examples of professional theological writers from the feminist theological discourse will help to illustrate how voice works in theological writing.

The third chapter of the dissertation invites the reader to delve more deeply into the construction of voice using intersectional theory developed by black feminists and womanist thinkers. Employing this excellent analytical tool, the chapter examines the writing of Desmond Tutu to determine how he constructed an effective prophetic voice in the midst of an apartheid society. Tutu's process of creating this multi-valent prophetic voice can be helpful to theological educators considering how to assist students with their writing.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation frames theological writing and the creation of voice as not only social, but also relational. Using the theological resources of Ubuntu

theology as developed by Tutu and some of his African interlocutors, including Anglican feminist theologian Denise Ackermann, this chapter articulates a rationale for addressing the gaps experienced by diverse, non-traditional writers in theological education. The relational theology of Ubuntu provides educators with a theological grounding from which we might envision future pedagogical projects that will assist students.

The final chapter integrates these four chapters to offer concrete approaches to a process-oriented writing pedagogy for theological education. In contrast to the product-orientation that we now adhere to in higher education, this method offers the possibility that student writers can become more aware of themselves and their voices, their audiences, the complicated ways that they must engage with previous research presented by authoritative voices, the contexts in which they are writing and ministering, and the genres used in writing theology. This practical theological approach in the dissertation offers theological educators a way forward from seeing writing only in terms of its academic utility as a product to seeing it as a process of transformation for the writer. Only if we, as theological educators, make this shift to see and teach theological writing as a process of transformation of our students, whatever their backgrounds, will we enable them to become the kind of ministers they dream of being.

VIII. *Coda: Hearing a Student's Voice in Her Question*

To conclude this chapter, I end with the voice of a student, without further comment beyond her reflection, so that her voice and the voices of the other four students introduced in this chapter will resonate across the upcoming chapters as we walk through these various aspects of this practical theological project. The student, Ana Ibarra, is a

very well-educated lay person in her 40s who came to the United States from her home in Mexico to study theology at Boston College. An experienced architect and a religious educator in her hometown of Monterrey, Ibarra is currently finishing her master's degree in theology and ministry. In her reflection on writing in academic English, which she wrote first in Spanish[52] and then translated into English, Ibarra expresses her willingness to write in English and describes her sense of being unable to fully capture her thoughts and feelings in a language other than her mother tongue, Spanish. She writes in this way, ending with a question for us to keep in mind as we go forward:

> To write theology in English has been a great challenge. Just being able to express what I understand and believe hasn't been easy. When I began studying theology abroad, I thought that my greatest challenge would be to write my papers in English. However, when I got one of my professors to let me write in Spanish I realized that writing in English wasn't the hardest part, but to be able to express in words what your experience is telling you in the closest way possible was the greatest challenge. Still, without comparison, writing in Spanish made me better express my experience. Then I realized it was better to write in Spanish and then translate into English, but this meant double work.
>
> It was this experience, to translate my thoughts, when I realized how different Spanish is compared to English. When I write in English I feel that my thoughts are not complete. For Spanish speakers, one word in Spanish achieved a complete idea. In English writing the same idea needs to be more detailed leaving nothing to the imagination. Writing in English limited my way of expressing myself because I'm more concerned with writing correctly so that North American people can understand and I feel that my words do not describe my experience in depth. Writing in Spanish allows me to see my feelings more clearly.
>
> My first lessons in theology, I remember feeling the conflict between learning to express my thoughts and write clearly in English. I remember during the class of "Writing Theology Well" with Lucretia Yaghjian, we read Mary Oliver's poem "I Want to Write Something So Simply,"[53] which made me think about what good writing can make in a person. Making someone feel identified and connected to my experiences gave me hope for progress in this challenge. However, I keep wondering, if I could ever achieve this in a second language and pass on my experience as I do in Spanish?[54]

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[52] See Appendix D for the Spanish version of Ibarra's reflection.
[53] Mary Oliver's poem is included in Appendix C of this chapter.
[54] Ana Ibarra, personal email dated January 26, 2015. Used with permission.

Chapter Two

Defining Voice: Writers Navigate the Rhetorical Challenges of Writing Theology in Contemporary Theological Education

> Some get tired of the same story / and quit speaking; / a farmer leaning into /
> his row of potatoes, / a mother walking the same child / to school. /
> What will we learn today? / There should be an answer, / and it should / change.
> ~ Naomi Shihab Nye[55]

I. *Writing as Losing: The Struggle of Learning in Theological Education*

When a theology student like Ana Ibarra writes, what story of faith is she telling? Whose story is it? For whom is she telling it? Is she telling herself what she needs to know? Is she demonstrating to her professor the proper "knowledge" in order to prove mastery of certain content and to get a desired grade? Is she tired of telling the same old story? Is she creating new stories, ideas, images, and answers in order to share theological insights with others at school and beyond? How can she go about doing so in a language that conveys her experiences and insights? Often, students have no clear idea of the answers to these questions, or even that the questions exist, and this contributes to their non-productive struggles in writing. In truth, a student writer is doing all of the above and more, whether she knows it or not. Any writer, including a graduate student writer, enters into a complex and often unexamined rhetorical situation that places many demands on her, calling for a variety of creative responses from her, all of which must be woven into the layers of her writing, somehow. This is a very complicated situation to be writing in. All academic writing is situated at the intersection of an active site of social, intellectual, psychological, and political engagement between students and their teachers, other students, and those outside of the academy for whom students imagine themselves

[55] Naomi Shihab Nye, "Telling the Story," in *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems* (Portland, Oregon: The Eighth Mountain Press, 1995), 132-133. Read the entire poem in Appendix F.

to be writing. Yet most of this terrain is unexplored, unarticulated, unseen, and unheard by students and teachers alike.

Theological writing, including student writing, is especially demanding due to the facts that there are several layers of communication operating at the same time and that this type of writing is not just for one audience. Theological writing must take into account what theologian David Tracy calls the "three publics of theology": the church, the academy, and wider society.[56] No matter which public is prioritized in a piece of writing, a theologian must be responsible to all of these publics, even though one or more might be addressed only indirectly. The writing conundrum is especially pressing for graduate students in theology, who generally take very seriously their responsibilities to the professors who represent the academy, to the communities of faith from which they come and to which they will likely return, and to the ecclesial and societal concerns that drove them to deeper study in the first place. But how is a student to weave together her responses to the demands of these publics while she is still on a steep curve of learning as a novice in the practice of theological writing? How does a student learn to live in the layers, to juggle the various requirements and needs of these publics while focusing intently on a particular public—in this case, the academic public that is represented by her primary reader, the professor? How does a theology student learn to tell a new story, to give different answers, when so much of the world, the academy, and the church fears change? This broad line of inquiry is the preoccupation of this chapter, in particular, and the dissertation, in general. I propose that, by guiding students to think intentionally and creatively about their voices as writers, theological educators will help each student grow

[56] David Tracy, "A Social Portrait of the Theologian: The Three Publics of Theology: Society, Academy, Church," in *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), 3-26.

more fully into his or her role as a minister, theologian, pastoral caregiver, teacher, social justice activist, chaplain, policy advisor, spiritual director, or other vocational calling.

This insistence on attention to voice comes from my experience with the many students seeking my assistance with theological writing, who emphasize their concern about their voices with no prompting from me. Often, they make comments like, "I can't hear my voice anymore" or "I've lost my voice." They simply cannot figure out how to tell a new story of faith within the confines of academic study. These kinds of statements and the feelings underneath them indicate that students have an intuitive sense of a problem in their writing that relates to the way in which they communicate with others and relate to themselves. The academic and other demands they face are simultaneously stretching them and confining them, but this dual process of expansion and contraction is often experienced predominantly as a loss. Students experience this loss keenly in their writing as a loss of "voice." The task of a theological educator committed to helping students with their writing is to guide them through both the losses and the gains of learning in and through the writing process so that deeper transformation might be possible.

Viewed through this lens, writing and the writer's voice become important windows onto the struggle of learning and growing in the study of theology in the academy. Even further, the writer's voice is a site that demands investigation because students themselves articulate voice as the main "problem" within the greater "problem" of writing, which then points to the even larger "problem" of theological learning itself. Because students instinctively characterize their writing difficulties as a problem of

voice, the concept of voice provides a strong starting point for theological educators to consider in the effort to support student learning.

This second chapter, therefore, explores this issue of voice in theological writing, defining it as a social process, rather than as a psychological feature of writing.[57] The first section of the chapter, subtitled "Writing As Social Activity," situates voice in writing as a social phenomenon, following in the line of argument established by composition theorists Lucretia Yaghjian, Marylin M. Cooper, and Michael Holzman. This initial understanding of writing as a social act is followed with a narrower focus on the rhetorical dimensions of writing and voice. This second section of the chapter, titled "Writing As A Rhetorical Act: Reasoning Shared in Community," advances an argument based on ideas from contemporary composition theorist Erika Lindemann, who traces the roots of her thinking to the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle. This Aristotelian lens helps theological educators to understand more fully both the larger features of writing and the role of voice within the writing process. The chapter also advances a new analytical construct, which is conceptualized as a triangular model capturing several rhetorical concepts and relating them to each other. This triangle is a structure built on the insights of Aristotle, Lindemann, and others as well as on my own experience as a writer and teacher of writing; I have found it to be helpful in talking to theological writers about what they are doing when they write.

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[57] Feminists thinkers, starting with Carol Gilligan in *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982) and Mary Belenky, et al., in *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (1986), have focused on voice in their work. Their insights about voice as as a psychological construct can enhance a conversation about voice and must be taken into consideration in future research on this topic. Additionally, in his work on voice, composition theorist Peter Elbow articulates an understanding of voice as a feature of personal authenticity in relation to the social constructivist approach, which provides another helpful perspective that must be reserved for future work.

If the second section provides a rather static structural lens for analyzing voice rhetorically, the third section in this chapter focuses on voice as an energetic rhetorical process and a site of struggle. This third section, called "Writing as Voicing: Negotiating the Struggle," draws on the work of early twentieth-century Russian philosopher, sociologist, and linguist Mikhail Bakhtin for insights about the social nature of writing that connect strongly with rhetorically-oriented composition theory. Bakhtin emphasizes that voice, as a feature that emerges in the situational tensions of the writing process, is an ever-changing, multiple (rather than singular) phenomenon; this approach to voice has been appropriated by composition theorist Frank Farmer, who argues that a Bakhtinian understanding of voice is a key part of what he calls the "generative struggle"[58] of writing. This concept of a generative struggle is especially useful for theological educators determined to assist students because it recognizes the difficulty and creativity of the writing process. This third section of the chapter also includes analyses of theological writing, in this case, two examples from feminist theological discourse, to demonstrate how Bakhtin's notion of voice—along with the rhetorical triangle for theological writing—might be of assistance in teaching theological writing.

The conclusion of the chapter, "Writing As Constructing: The Generative Struggle of Learning in Theological Education," discusses the way in which this concept of voice can be useful to theological educators wanting to assist students with their writing. The conclusion emphasizes the need for theological educators to take up the creative work of assisting student writers in knowing the struggle more fully by encouraging them to experiment with constructing voices in their writing. The main aim

[58] Frank Farmer, "Voice Reprised: Three Etudes for a Dialogic Understanding." *Rhetoric Review* 13.2 (Spring 1995): 316.

of this section and this chapter as a whole is to provide an understanding of voice that is flexible and open and is able to take into account the complexity of the writing process for graduate students in theology as it is practiced today. The intent is that this chapter will form the basis of an understanding of voice that will guide the remainder of the dissertation in fruitful ways even as the concept of voice develops further in each subsequent chapter. When voice is foregrounded in theological educators' thinking about theological writing, we will be able to help students develop an awareness of the power dynamics at play in written communication, analyze their own writing in its context, make choices about the kind of relationships they wish to establish in and through their writing, and integrate their thinking and writing into a more coherent whole. Attention to voice in theological writing can promote a better writing process for students, with the potential added benefit of a better product (paper, essay, exegesis, etc.) and, perhaps, a better grade. And those are the short-term benefits, the long-term benefits being increased relational, ethical, and communicative capacities in students' chosen vocations.

II. ***Writing As A Social Activity***

In the first chapter of her book, *Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers* (2006), composition theorist Lucretia B. Yaghjian emphasizes the social nature of theological writing. As a veteran teacher in several theological institutions in Boston, Yaghjian has worked for years with graduate student writers, and she has done so in the North American academic context described in Chapter One. In the Preface of her book, she clearly indicates her audience and context for the book, saying that *Writing Theology Well* "is written for theological students who

need a working guide for the writing that they do in theological courses and for their writing instructors and tutors."[59] Her experience with the students themselves, particularly those from non-dominant educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, led her to write this new rhetorical guide for theological writing.

With theology students and their teachers foremost in her mind, then, Yaghjian highlights the importance of understanding writing as social communication. She notes, "At its most fundamental level, writing is a means of communication through which we convey information to others across time and space."[60] Through writing in theological education, students participate in sharing ideas with a community of learners and thinkers who exist within geographical proximity, including other students, professors, scholars, and writers; however, this practice of communicating in time and space crosses immediate boundaries. Keeping Tracy's sense of the "three publics" in mind, for example, it is clear that students must also recognize persons and communities beyond the immediate setting for whom their insights might be relevant. For example, a piece of writing might be "for" a class in graduate school, but it might also be "for" the student's home parish; most writing has multiple audiences, including ones that students do not consciously recognize. At the heart of the writing endeavor is the drive to share with others in the present, to consider those who might enter the theological conversation in the future, and to understand those who wrote in the past. Writing is, first and foremost, a social act that unfolds across time and space.

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[59] Lucretia B. Yaghjian, *Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers* (New York: Continuum, 2006), xix. Yaghjian further specifies the students with whom she has worked, saying that the book's "original audience comprised my students at Episcopal Divinity School, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, and the Boston College Institute for Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, who have patiently and persistently taught me what they need to learn as writers in a theological context" (xix).
[60] Yaghjian, *Writing Theology Well*, 4.

Yaghjian is not the first to emphasize this social dimension of writing. Since at least the 1980s, composition theorists have been thinking and talking explicitly about writing's social nature in their opposition to the Romantic philosophical notion of the lone writer who is engaged only with her imagination and who writes with feeling but without being conscious of the presence of others. This shift coincided with broader changes in understandings of the nature of language and its role in creating knowledge. In "A Brief History of Rhetoric and Composition" (2000), composition theorists Patricia Bizzell, Bruce Herzberg, and Nedra Reynolds note that, after introducing pedagogical approaches in the 1970s that focused on three areas (developments in cognitive psychology, the needs of students for whom academic English was unfamiliar, and the ways that writing worked across the curriculum), scholars involved in composition theory and teaching began to turn their attention to writing as a social activity. These thinkers, teachers, and writers

> studied not only writing but all aspects of language use, which they regarded as creating knowledge, not merely disseminating it. These interests have been shared with scholars in history, literary criticism, philosophy, sociology, and speech communication. Scholars in all these fields sought an account of discourse—language in use—that acknowledges the power of rhetoric to help create a community's worldview, knowledge, and interpretive practices.[61]

The effort to understand language as alive in the social context tended toward interdisciplinarity, making use of the insights of all these fields.

In the late twentieth century, as the postmodern turn made its way through much of the intellectual discourse, composition theorists followed the trend to question ideas about the life of the solitary mind that had been the status quo since the Enlightenment; this led them to critique the notion of writing as a mental act done in isolation. For

[61] Patricia Bizzell, Bruce Herzberg, and Nedra Reynolds, "A Brief History of Rhetoric and Composition" in *The Bedford Biography for Teachers of Writing*, 5th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 10-11.

example, in *Writing as Social Action* (1989), Marylin M. Cooper and Michael Holzman, describe the tendency of theorists who subscribe to the notion of writing as an isolated or semi-isolated activity this way: "The scene of writing is often conceived in terms of the ideologically loaded image of the individual writer sitting at a desk in a garret, searching her own soul for inspiration in order to write for some individual reader, equally isolated in her curtained window-seat."[62] As the book unfolds, the authors emphasize that writing is never undertaken in isolation like this scene in the garret, even when a writer is alone at her desk. It is, instead, part of a larger social process, whether it takes place in a classroom full of people or in a person's lonely study. This is because "language and learning themselves are in the first instance social activities"[63] and writing is "a real interaction among social groups and individuals."[64] This stress on writing as an active social undertaking removes writing from a purely cognitive realm and situates it squarely in the world of human action and interaction.

This sense of writing as something shared socially is a crucial dimension for theological educators to consider when creating assignments or discussing how writing itself fits into the overall curriculum. What this insight about the social nature of writing offers to theological educators is a way of thinking about writing that opens up a wide range of possibilities for guiding students as they seek to develop the skills needed for healthy and informed ministries in the church and the world. Because writing is a social activity, it is an activity that can shed light upon students' relationships with the world of ideas, with other people, with themselves as writers and nascent ministers, with the

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[62] Marylin M. Cooper and Michael Holzman, *Writing As Social Action* (Portsmouh, NH: Heinemann Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1989), vii.
[63] Cooper and Holzman, *Writing As Social Action*, ix.
[64] Cooper and Holzman, *Writing As Social Action*, x.

context in which they live and work, and with God. Teaching theological writing as social activity can make these relationships more explicit and give students tools for navigating power dynamics in their communications as they write sermons, church newsletters, diocesan reports, op-ed pieces for the newspaper, magazine articles, essays for scholarly journals, and more. When theological educators do not pay attention to the social and relational dimensions of writing, they miss a number of teachable moments that can shape not only students' grappling with the content of courses in the present, but also their practices of ministry in the future. The next section of this chapter furthers this argument by taking up the question, How does the social nature of writing shape our understanding of voice and its relevance to theological writing? The answer to this question is formed in light of rhetorical categories that emphasize the social and relational nature of writing for the purpose of supporting theological educators' re-examination of their own pedagogical practices around writing.

III. *Writing As A Rhetorical Act: Reasoning Shared in Community*

One key way that some composition theorists have articulated writing as a social activity is to frame it as a rhetorical process in which a writer becomes aware of her role and intentional about her aims in relationship to her audience. For instance, Yaghjian says that, in order to communicate through writing, students (and teachers) of theology and ministry must first understand that writing is a "sociorhetorical activity."[65] She emphasizes this point throughout *Writing Theology Well* by focusing in each chapter on the rhetorical dimensions of theological genres and practices. But what does it mean for theological writing to be rhetorical, and where does voice fit into the picture? To

[65] Yaghjian, *Writing Theology Well*, 5.

understand this, we must briefly consider what rhetoric was understood to be by thinkers of the past and what it has come to mean in light of more recent composition theory.

Ancient Rhetoric ~ The Greeks

Rhetoric itself is a field of study with its roots in ancient Greek philosophy. As composition theorist Erika Lindemann points out in *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* (2001), our earliest records of this study come from the era when Corax of Syracuse (5th c. B.C.E.) defined rhetoric for use in legal situations.[66] From Corax, we have evidence that thinkers were wrestling with the use and meanings of language in public discourse, and this conversation has not ceased. After Corax's development of an understanding of rhetoric in a legal sense, Plato (c. 428-347 B.C.E.) grappled with it in relation to philosophy. In the *Gorgias* (c. 380 B.C.E.), for example, Plato took the Sophists to task for using flowery language to manipulate people, writing, "The rhetorician need not know the truth about things; he has only to discover some way of persuading the ignorant that he has more knowledge than those who know."[67] Because of this commitment to privilege pure truth seeking (philosophy) over what he deemed to be deceptive persuasion (rhetoric), Plato held philosophy above rhetoric as a means of inquiry.

However, Plato's student, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.), had other ideas—and practical concerns—that shifted thinkers' understandings of rhetoric and its role in truth-seeking. Aristotle sought another way to understand rhetoric and ultimately "defend[ed it] from those who would use its principles to persuade an audience of what is untrue or evil," and, instead, he "argu[ed] that rhetoric is a useful, practical art, dependent on

[66] Erika Lindemann, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 41.
[67] Plato, *Gorgias*, qtd. in Lindemann, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, 39.

logical argumentation."[68] In his *Rhetoric* (c. 335 B.C.E.), Aristotle writes, "Let rhetoric be [defined as] an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion."[69] Lindemann posits that, rather than judging rhetoric as anathema to finding truth, Aristotle understood it as "a form of reasoning about probabilities, based on assumptions people share as members of a community."[70] Taking a more pragmatic and explicitly social approach than his predecessor and teacher, Aristotle embraced rhetoric as a means of communication within a discourse community about probable, rather than certain, truths. He also emphasized the role of human reason in this shared inquiry, and he saw rhetoric as one way of pursuing truth on a smaller, human scale.

Rhetoric has much to offer theology and, especially, theological writing because of its engagement of human reason with probable truths within the realm of shared inquiry for a particular purpose. But in order to make use of rhetoric in theological writing and in teaching writing with students, we must develop a way of talking about it with each other. In this, we can garner some help from Aristotle himself. To understand rhetoric as a form of communication, Aristotle breaks the practice down into several dimensions that theological educators and students can examine and discuss. Of special note, Aristotle pays attention to three dimensions of rhetoric: "the character [ethos] of the speaker," the "argument [logos] itself," and, in the audience, "feel[ing] emotion [pathos]."[71] These three points of interest—the character of the speaker (ethos), the main idea and structure of the argument (logos), and the emotive responses of the audience (pathos)—have been interpreted and adapted by subsequent generations of philosophers,

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[68] Lindemann, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, 43. Brackets, mine.
[69] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. by George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), 36. Brackets, the editor's.
[70] Lindemann, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, 42.
[71] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 37-38. Brackets, the editor's.

composition theorists, and teachers, and they are key for theological educators to bear in mind. They form the basis of a triangle-shaped rhetorical model from which we can work to grapple with theological writing.[72]

Rhetoric in Contemporary Composition ~ Erika Lindemann

One good example of the adaptation of Aristotle's ideas to contemporary composition pedagogies may be found in Lindemann's book. In it, she re-describes Aristotle's rhetorical components of writing in terms of her own four-part "communication triangle," which "offers students a useful model for defining rhetorical problems such as those framed by most writing assignments" because it "establishes relationships" between the various terms in the model.[73] The four basic components of Lindemann's communication triangle include the writer, the reader, the subject (each one located on one of the three angles) and the message (located in the center of the triangle).[74] While Lindemann does not take on all of the philosophical categories opened up by Aristotle's presentation, such as the question of the writer's character when thinking about ethos, she does employ this approach to begin a conversation about student writing.

Based on the bones of the Aristotelian model—and emphasizing the relationships represented by it—Lindemann designates three questions that she has found are helpful to writers, especially student writers, as they work:

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[72] See the conceptual model of this rhetorical triangle, adapted for contemporary use in theological education, in Appendix E.
[73] Lindemann, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, 11.
[74] Lindemann, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, 11. It is useful to note that this communications triangle, as with most rhetorical models, has its roots in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* although Aristotle was probably thinking more about preparing speeches than written communications.

> What do I know about my subject? (writer-subject relationship)
> Who is my audience? (writer-reader relationship)
> What does my audience need to know to understand the subject? (reader-subject relationship)[75]

Initially, she leaves questions about the message, the center term, unasked, but, as the chapter progresses, she develops her communications triangle further using the work of other composition theorists[76] to embellish each component and the model as a whole.

While Lindemann's model is geared toward undergraduate writers, it is offered here as a starting point for thinking about graduate students' theological writing because the basic challenges of writing remain the same for all writers, no matter what genre, discipline, or topic the writer is tackling. For example, a student writing an essay on church history must take her reader(s) into account when presenting an historical trajectory, making sure to designate clearly the time and place of events she is discussing as well as presenting the theological ideas unfolding in the present as well as the past. These temporal concerns stem from an effort both to be accurate in terms of knowledge and to guide the audience. Good theological writing calls not only for the explicit naming of dates and locations in such an essay, but also for the consistent uses of adverbs and verb tenses and the careful negotiation of tenses when juxtaposing historical events and current theological interpretations of those events. A theological writer composing an academic essay on any topic, a homily for a parish, an informational church newsletter, a theological reflection, a letter to the editor, lyrics to a hymn, a pastoral announcement, or any number of other written texts would do well to consider the key relationships outlined by Lindemann in the effort to communicate well with her reader(s) or listener(s).

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[75] Lindemann, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, 11.
[76] These thinkers include Lisa Ede, Andrea Lunsford, and James Kinneavy.

The model presented in this chapter and illustrated in Appendix E is further developed than Lindemann's, particularly with regard to voice, and is based on my own experience as a writer and teacher of writing in theological education. Lindemann is correct in stressing that "rhetoric [is] an ongoing process, meeting the needs of different cultures in different ways."[77] Rhetorical practices and models are works-in-progress, necessarily responsive to their situations. Thus, the model presented here is revised, just as Lindemann and others have revised Aristotle's ideas. Rhetoric, like language, changes depending on the different contexts in which writers write, on whether a writer is composing a speech or a printed text, on the genre the writer has chosen to engage, and on other variables that significantly affect both the process and the product of writing. The rhetorical model offered here, called "A Rhetorical Triangle for Theological Writing,"[78] is similar to Lindemann's.

A Rhetorical Triangle for Theological Writing

The rhetorical triangle depicted in Appendix E contains three of the basic Aristotelian components (ethos, pathos, and logos) as adapted by Lindemann: 1) writer/ethos, 2) audience/pathos, and 3) subject matter/logos.[79] To these have been added the concepts of text and context to make five terms or features for consideration. The concept of voice is central to all of them and comprises a sixth and final term for discussion. Without addressing Aristotle's particular uses of the three components he proposes or Lindemann's uses of them, the dissertation offers definitions of the writer, the audience,

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[77] Lindemann, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, 39.
[78] Composition theorists and rhetoricians have long called different triangular rhetorical models the "rhetorical triangle," a generic term that I also employ, modified by a specific reference to theological writing.
[79] See Appendix E, Figure 1.

the subject matter, the text, the context, and voice—all of which I have developed over time through my work with theological writers, through in-person and email conversations with Lucretia Yaghjian, in my own writing for doctoral courses, and through readings of the works of other contemporary composition theorists.

1. *The Context*

First, when thinking about the rhetorical situation, writing students and educators in theological education must consider the context in which the writing is unfolding. The context has to do with when and where the writer is writing as well as the when and where of the anticipated reading. Thus, a White student writer of a homily due as part of her field education requirements might consider both the specific demands of her current academic writing context in a private institution of higher education in a large North American city as well as that of her ministerial context, which anticipates as intended readers/hearers the people who will be in the pews next Sunday at a small, predominantly White parish in a rural part of the state. Students may be juggling considerations about multiple contexts as they write, not simply the academic context.

Additionally, the notion of context applies to the when and where of the subject matter because it invites the writer and her readers to understand that any subject matter has its own history and place in a larger discourse.[80] When I teach writing students to think about the context of their writing, I invite them to consider the socio-economic, political, linguistic, cultural, ecclesial, historical and other dimensions of the situation that they are writing in, that their readers are reading in, and that their subject matter has

[80] For example, understandings about the theological concept of sacrificial or substitutionary atonement have changed over the history of Christian discourse and may not be the same in theological communities of discourse today as they were fifty or five hundred years ago.

evolved in. Are students writing from a place within the academy and/or the church and/or wider society? What makes their context unique? In what ways is their context complicated? What kinds of demands does their context make of them and of their reader(s)? Are there ideas that can be presented in one context and not in another? What happens if the context that the writer considers herself to be writing in is different than the context of the readers? What happens if the writer is taking on subject matter that has been discussed in one context but not in another due to cultural taboos? How should a writer account for the shift in understandings of a theological idea from one socio-historical context to another? These kinds of considerations can assist student writers as they prepare for their writing projects in many different courses, helping them gain clarity about the opportunities and limitations of writing in a particular context.

Theology students can unpack and critically examine the academic situation in which they are writing—one of an increasingly diverse and complicated and changing theological and educational landscape in the United States—by using this line of inquiry to aid them in being successful in this context and beyond. These context-oriented questions also invite them to think about the disjunctions between the context that they are writing for presently and the ones they hope to write for in the future. For example, a student from rural Vietnam who is writing in an elite higher education institution within the North American context needs to consider what demands are placed upon her by the academy in this industrialized developed Western world. Additionally, she must recognize that these demands are probably not the same as those that will impinge upon her when she returns to her work as a pastoral counselor or teacher back in agricultural Vietnam. A thorough understanding of one's context(s) is crucial to good theological

writing, no matter where one does it, and the burden is on theological educators to help students explore both the immediate and wider contexts of their writing.

2. *The Audience(s)*

The second term of the rhetorical triangle for discussion is that of the audience, which includes a primary or intended audience and radiates out into secondary, and perhaps tertiary, audiences. An audience is like a set of concentric circles of relationship with the closest ring to the writer being the primary/intended audience for the piece of writing. Our students in theological education are usually consciously writing for this very immediate primary audience—and this audience is usually conceived of as one person: the professor who has given the student an assignment. It is helpful to student writers to think critically about this primary audience: Who is this person or persons? What is the student's relationship to him/her/them? How does the power flow in the student's relationship to this primary reader or readers? What is the primary reader's role in the student's life and work? Is she or he a teacher, a colleague, a friend, a family member, a boss or superior? In addition to considering who the audience is, the writer benefits from considering what this reader knows about the subject matter: How close is this reader to the subject matter? Is she/he an expert on Augustine's *Confessions*, or is the primary reader a person who has read the Bishop of Hippo's autobiography as part of a more general education? The answers to all of these questions can help a writer to shape her writing in such a way that it communicates more clearly and powerfully the ideas that she wants to share.

However, it is important to note that, in terms of audience, the professor or a students' classmates may or may not be the only audience member(s) whom a student writer is imagining as she drafts a final paper for a class. Particularly for those who intend to take up some kind of leadership positions in any of the three publics of theological writing, there is an awareness of other audiences "out there" whom students consider as they write. Sometimes, they are aware of asking themselves questions like, What would my bishop think if he were to read this paper on baptism, which contradicts his operative theology of baptism? How will my mother superior react when she finds out that I wrote about the pastoral care of gay and lesbian persons? Or even, What will my mother say when she hears that I wrote a master's thesis on the ordination of women in the Southern Baptist church? No piece of writing is free from writers' conceptions of secondary or even tertiary audiences "out there somewhere." It is helpful to graduate students in theology to be aware of these audiences "out there" or imagined "in here"—in their minds—because they do play a role in shaping the writing, even if they are unrecognized.

Additionally, there comes a time in a person's career as a writer when she realizes that she does not have full control over her audience. While she may have an intended primary audience and may even recognize the secondary and tertiary audiences imbedded in her thinking, she cannot control the way that ideas move from person to person once she has presented them in written (or spoken) form. It is a feature of ideas that they are not easy to confine, even when they are presented in an end-of-semester essay for a class. An example of this recognition of the fluidity of ideas might be that a student could write and present a paper in a class and find the copy of her paper outline passed along within

or beyond the immediate learning community. She might, for example, hear some classmates using a unique phrase she wrote and used in a presentation before other students—and those classmates might or might not attribute that phrase to her. Once the paper or presentation is done, the writer will not have total control over who engages with these ideas, and she might or might not receive credit in the form of acknowledgement or accolades. She might even experience receiving negative criticism from unimagined quarters—for example, people who have heard about or read about her work from other students in her class, who may or may not have fully grasped the author's ideas or intentions.

Theology students seem to have some intuitive sense of this lurking "other" audience beyond the intended audience, and they sometimes censor themselves in writing papers not only because they worry about what their professor is going to say, but also because they are concerned about who else might respond from an unexpected place. Sometimes, students are even worried about their ideas being "stolen" by others without being given attribution. These concerns seem particularly true for theology students as they write master's theses, which often stay on file at the university and are sometimes consulted by other students or professors. No matter what audience a student writer assumes for herself, she may have layers of audience out there about whom she knows—and some about whom she is unaware. Still, thinking about audience in a constructive way can help students become more familiar with their primary target audience and can help them deal directly with the fears that they may feel about this audience or about the unexpected readers who might encounter their work. Much of this has to do with negotiating the relationship a writer has with her audience—including the dimensions of

power that exist in the relationship; this is an issue that will come up in the next chapter, which will examine it using the lens of feminist/womanist intersectional theory, and in the fourth chapter of the dissertation as well.

3. *The Subject Matter*

The third component of the rhetorical triangle for consideration is the subject matter of writing, which has to do with the growth in the writer's understanding of a topic or idea as she works to interpret it from her perspective and share her new understanding with her reader(s). Subject matter includes the student writer's knowledge of what is being discussed in broad terms (the field or discourse in which the topic fits), in narrower terms (how a particular course presented by a particular professor shapes a topic), and in terms of the student writer's main idea (thesis) itself. More sophisticated writers typically have some grasp on the state of the discourse on a particular subject—Is the topic "hot" or not within the prevailing conversations of the day? Is it controversial or a settled matter? Where have the lines of inquiry come from and gone to in relation to this subject?

Along with these kinds of questions, subject matter also relates to the writer's engagement with her interlocutors, including authoritative views and voices. The rhetorical feature of subject matter is where the writer works out her negotiation with these authorities in the form of using key terms, paraphrases, direct quotations, and/or summaries of others' ideas and approaches to the subject matter. The subject matter is also the locus of her grappling with these power dynamics between herself and these authoritative voices, a process that can lead to adequate representation of the other voices, to inadequate representation in the form of plagiarism, to a lack of self-assertion

on the page, or even to an over-assertion of the writer's own voice on the page to the exclusion of others.

To handle the demands that the subject matter itself makes on the writer, the writer must be aware of the degree to which her reader is an expert in the subject matter that she is writing about, for this will shape how much background information she must give in order to educate her reader so that he/she can follow the writer's argument. Additionally, the student writer has to consider the degree to which she must demonstrate mastery of certain subject matter because she knows that her grade depends upon her expert reader acknowledging that she "knows the material." Beyond this concern with the relationship of her audience with the subject matter, the writer must also grapple with her own interests, engage her own curiosity and imagination, and consider her own aims and purposes in doing the writing on this topic in the first place. Is she excited about this particular topic, or is she writing about it to satisfy a course requirement? Does she see herself going further in this work, or is this paper the end of the road? These and other concerns about the subject matter have a major role in shaping any piece of theological writing and must be attended to by theological educators.

4. *The Writer Herself*

Fourthly, the writer must consider herself, her aims and purposes. Any writer will benefit from knowing herself well in relation to her social context, for this self-knowledge can assist greatly in negotiating the problems and opportunities that arise in any writing situation. She will also benefit from understanding clearly—or making up her mind—about her purposes for writing in the academy as well as the larger aims of her

communications in general. It is also helpful for a writer to know her relationship with her audience as well as what her interest is in the subject matter at hand, as mentioned earlier in the sections on audience and subject matter. Questions that arise from this line of rhetorical inquiry include: Who is it that is doing this writing—a new or seasoned student, a professor, someone non-affiliated with a university, a priest or lay person or monastic, a liberal or conservative, a native English speaker or an English-as-a-second-language speaker/writer? Exploring and knowing the intersections that demarcate the writer's social experiences will only enrich her ability to marshal her resources for the task at hand. Additionally, a writer should ask herself whether she intends to persuade, educate, entertain, or any number of purposes that might be possible for the social act of writing. While theological educators cannot, in a semester or even in one degree program, hope to help a student know herself fully, even initial explorations of these and related questions can have very positive effects upon student writing—and upon student morale while writing![81]

5. *The Text*

The fifth rhetorical component in the rhetorical triangle for theological writing is the written text, which lies at the center of the triangle and is also worthy of consideration from a rhetorical perspective. Here, the word "text" sits in the middle of the triangle instead of Lindemann's term, "message" in order to emphasize the written (versus spoken) aspect of the process that this model attempts to capture. In communications studies and cultural studies the term "text" has expanded to include a wide range of items

[81] The next chapter will focus on this question of who the writer is in relation to her or his context, subject matter, and audience by offering an intersectional analysis of exemplary theological writing.

that can be "read" by a reader/onlooker/listener: for example, advertisements, films, individual persons, and works of visual or musical art. However, this dissertation employs the word "text" more restrictively following *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition: "The wording of something written or printed; the actual words, phrases, and sentences as written."[82] Even more specifically, with regard to this dissertation, a text is a document written by a theology student or theologian since the focus here is on theological writing. For the purposes of this argument, then, the text is the written document that is the result of the combined interactions of these other dimensions of the rhetorical process. The text is the written record of the writer relating to her audience(s) and interacting with her subject matter; it is the site that reveals how the relationship between the audience and the subject matter is mediated by the writer; it is the locus of the discursive history of the subject matter making demands upon the writer and reader(s); it shows the readers how the writer's understanding of her context and the contexts of her subject matter and audience(s) impinges upon the writing process; and it reveals something of the writer's voice.

Some of the questions about the written text that arise for teachers of composition, including those of us who teach theological writing, are: How is the written text a record of the interrelationships between the writer, her audience(s), her subject matter, and her context? What form does the written text take in terms of its genre as well as its structure, and why does the writer choose this form? How are the ideas organized within the text as a whole and within the smaller components of the text (sections, paragraphs)? What kinds of sentence structures does the writer use, and do these effectively convey the subject

[82] "text, n.", *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, edited by Lesley Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

matter and the writer's argument? What word choices does the writer make, and how do these energize or deaden the writing? Are there words or sentences that seem more appropriate than others? What kind of tone is the writer using in the paper—knowing, sarcastic, imperious, funny, afraid? Are there changes to the text that would better convey the ideas that the writer is attempting to share with her audience? How does this particular written text seem to embody a voice, and what kind of voice is it? These and many other questions can and should be asked regarding texts written by theologians, including student theologians and their teachers.

6. *The Writer's Voice*

Finally, the feature of voice arises as the sixth feature to complete the rhetorical triangle! On the conceptualization of the rhetorical triangle in Appendix E, the voice is at the center of the entire process. While some might argue that voice is grounded in the writer's understanding of herself alone, this dissertation asserts that voice is somewhere in the interstices between all of the features of writing as it unfolds as a socio-rhetorical act. Voice emerges as a writer articulates her relationships with her audiences and her subject matter, but it is also shaped by her relationship to her context and to what she hopes to make happen in the text. Who a writer is and where she comes from offers some direction in terms of the voice a writer is able to muster—for example, in the case of vocabulary, if she has not studied theology before and does not know certain terminology well, she may not sound as though she is mature and conversant with the community of theological discourse. Voice is also expressed based on how the writer sees herself in relationship to her reader—based on this relationship, does she want to impress the reader

or lambaste him or her? Voice also emerges in the writer's relationship to her subject matter, resulting in a boring or an exciting tone. Voice can be heard in these relationships, but it is not solely these. Voice can be understood or "read" in the text, which is the written record of the writing process, but it is not captured in a static way by the written text because it emerges in the reading[83] as well as the writing. Some composition theorists, like Peter Elbow, align voice very closely with the self-understanding of the writer and the search for authenticity,[84] but the definition of the writer's voice employed here has more to do with a process of intentional construction in a social context rather than an interior discovery, as the next section of the chapter will attest.

From the perspective of rhetoric, the features just outlined are crucial for theological educators to consider when addressing student writing and the matter of voice. However, there is much more to writing than the context, audience, subject matter, writer, and text, and there is more to an analysis of theological writing than these features suggest. The use of the rhetorical triangle without an understanding of power in these rhetorical relationships could result in defining voice in writing as a static model rather than a dynamic process under construction by a student in her context. In order to go more deeply into the rhetorical process and to understand voice more fully, this chapter turns now to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, who presents a linguistic-rhetorical analysis of discourse that could be very helpful to theological educators and our students.

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[83] Theorists who contemplate the experience of the reader and the way that the writer's voice is heard by the reader have developed what is called Reader-Response theory and criticism. Key thinkers who articulate the Reader-Response approach include Wolfgang Iser, Norman Holland, Hans-Robert Jauss, Roland Barthes, and, perhaps most relevant to this dissertation, Stanley Fish, who proposed interpretive communities in his socially-oriented Reader-Response theory.

[84] See Peter Elbow, "Introduction: About Voice and Writing" in *Landmark Essays on Voice and Writing*, edited by Peter Elbow (New York/London: Routledge, 1994), xi-xlvii; *Everyone Can Write: Essays Toward a Hopeful Theory of Writing and Teaching Writing* (New York/Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000); and "Reconsiderations: Voice in Writing Again: Embracing Contraries," in *College English* 70.2 (November 2007), 168-188.

IV. *Writing as Voicing: Negotiating the Struggle*

With the groundwork now laid for a socio-rhetorical understanding of writing, this chapter now further examines the complexity of the writing process by examining more fully the role of voice and the dynamics of power in the writing process. This investigation unfolds by shifting focus from a general rhetorical analysis to a more specific analysis following Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's (1895-1975) linguistic insights in order to understand the subtleties of voice as it unfolds in the writing process, including Bakhtin's concept of voice as multiple or polyphonic and his acknowledgement of the push-and-pull of power through any discourse community.

Bakhtin has been chosen as the interlocutor for this section of Chapter Two for three reasons. First, his work has influenced several major composition theorists, including Cooper and Holzman, Peter Elbow, and Frank Farmer, whose works have shaped this dissertation in direct and indirect ways. Second, Bakhtin's approach as a scholar was to actively engage with other scholars and teachers in shared learning and writing; to listen to the forgotten or ignored voices of the past or present; to focus his concerns on how people actually use language in the social world rather than attempting to develop a theoretical system divorced from the everyday; and to be suspicious of any intellectual systems that posit a final answer to major questions. These scholarly commitments to collaboration, inclusion, the sociality language, and intellectual openness deeply inform this dissertation. Third, Bakhtin's life story shows him to be the ultimate frustrated writer, one who faced years of delays in publication due to wars and state-imposed closures of publishing houses in Russia; six-years' exile in Kazakhstan for his membership in the Russian Orthodox church and his intellectual pursuits; and the denial

of his doctorate in 1949 after many years of delay due to internal politics involving both academic institutions and the Soviet government. Despite these obstacles, Bakhtin persevered in his studies, teaching, intellectual collaborations, and writing, leaving a rich legacy behind not only of ideas, but also a way of staying actively engaged with the life of the mind that is instructive for students and theological educators alike.

Earlier, this chapter discussed the argument of composition theorists Cooper and Holzman, who assert that writing is always a social activity. To support their views, they quote Bakhtin, who wrote about this issue on his own and with his colleague, the Russian literary theorist Pavel Medvedev (1892-1938). In *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics* (1978), Bahktin and Medvedev assert that human beings "are most inclined to imagine ideological[85] [conceptual] creation as some inner process of understanding, comprehension, and perception, and do not notice that it in fact unfolds externally, for the eye, the ear, the hand. *It is not within us, but between us*."[86] While Bakhtin and Medvedev seem to be making a rather extreme statement here by externalizing the creation of ideas, it is the

[85] In general, in Bakhtin's works, "ideological" refers, broadly, to the world of ideas—to content—not to the Marxist politico-economic notion of ideology as part of class-based struggle. There has been much debate amongst scholars of Bakhtin about his relationship to Marx's ideas and whether he was the author of certain works that seem to be deeply indebted to Marxist thought. Along these lines, it is worth noting again that, as mentioned above, Bakhtin spent several years in internal exile in Kazakhstan under the Stalinist Soviet regime, which had its oppressive roots in a particular incarnation of Russian Marxism; it is difficult to imagine Bakhtin fully embracing Marxist thought because he experienced some of its worst excesses in practice. For more details, see Michael Holquist's "Introduction" in Bakhtin's *The Dialogical Imagination,* translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), xv-xxxiii.

[86] Bakhtin and Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics* (1978), qtd. in Cooper and Holzman, *Writing As Social Action*, xi. Bracketed material and emphasized words, mine. Originally published in the Soviet Union in 1928, this is one of the disputed works that may or may not have had Bakhtin's authorial involvement. Questions about Bakhtin's authorship of some texts have to do with the fact that he was part of a group of Russian literary critics, known as the Bakhtin Circle, who took formalism to task and proposed a sociological approach to literature instead. This group counted, amongst others, Medvedev, Matvei Isaevich Kagan (1889-1937), Lev Vasilievich Pumpianskii (1891-1940), Ivan Ivanovich Sollertinskii (1902-1944), and Valentin Nikolaevich Voloshinov (1895-1936) as members. These scholars wrote a number of works while affiliated with each other, and the lines of influence and authorship are not entirely clear in many of their works.

case that they are trying to decenter prevailing understandings of thinking and writing as entirely internal to the writer and the writer's private cognition and personal psychology. For Cooper and Holzman—and for theological educators as well—this opens up possibilities for thinking about, doing, and incorporating writing differently into our lives and our educational institutions because it forces us to contemplate the social dimensions of all ideation and of the writing process itself.[87] What might it mean to consider theological writing as something held *between us* rather than as something a student does on her or his own?

Links in the Chain

As if to emphasize this sociality of writing, Bakhtin writes in "The Problem of Speech Genres" (1986), which is one of his final sets of unfinished notes made near the end of his life, that "Any utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication."[88] He adds that any person making an utterance is "a respondent to a greater or lesser degree"[89] to an ongoing conversation. For Bakhtin, an "utterance" or a "speech" act refers to any act of verbal communication, spoken or written, and a "speaker" is a person who speaks and/or writes. Thus, one who is engaged in communication is part of an incomplete human chain of sharing, which has called forth a response from the speaker/writer, who "is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe."[90] Writers are not individuals who speak out of or into a void. Instead, Bakhtin

[87] Cooper and Holzman, *Writing As Social Action*, xi.
[88] Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres" in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, translated by Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 84.
[89] Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 69.
[90] Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 69.

says, any speaker/writer "presupposes not only the existence of the language system he is using, but also the existence of preceding utterances—his own and others'—with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another […]. Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances."[91] What Bakhtin means is this: our writing and our speech do not come out of nowhere, but are responses in relationship to ideas, experiences, and emotions expressed previously, whether by the speaker/writer herself or by someone else contemporaneous in time or in the past.

Frank Farmer, a composition theorist and scholar of Bakhtinian linguistics, emphasizes this relationality of writing and the ways in which voice, as a feature of the writing process, emerges in a dual kind of responsiveness to other voices, other readers, other writers—and to the ideas that those other voices have articulated. Farmer writes in "Voice Reprised: Three *Etudes* for a Dialogic Understanding" (1995) that "voice is something of a doubled phenomenon, both answering and anticipating an answer in every utterance."[92] This doubling of voice points to the creation of at least two voices for each piece of a person's writing as she faces those from the past whom she is answering and those from the future whom she is anticipating. Farmer comments that this means the following: "No one speaks in a vacuum; no voice is heard apart from those voices it answers and addresses. […] A voice in isolation has no reason to speak, no motive to be heard, and thus is meaningless."[93] To write is to relate to others.

With the recognition of the writer's voice as part of a relational practice in communication with others comes the realization that a writer must negotiate the power

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[91] Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 69.
[92] Frank Farmer, "Voice Reprised: Three *Etudes* for a Dialogic Understanding" in *Rhetoric Review* 13.2 (Spring 1995), 310.
[93] Farmer, "Voice Reprised," 310.

dynamics of her writing situation. Bakhtin, along with his colleagues Medvedev and V.N. Voloshniov (1895-1936), articulated a "situational model of language that accentuates the social and concrete character of practical speech 'acts,'" including writing.[94] This means that the voice of the nascent theologian and student minister is a voice constructed situationally in a complex socio-rhetorical context fraught with relational power dynamics and ideational conflict, some explicit and some implicit. This is a writer's voice (or voices!) that must learn to engage effectively the various dimensions of power at the same time as it learns to turn out into public discourse within the church, the academy, and/or wider society to avoid becoming sealed in upon itself.

The Push-and-Pull of Theological Discourse

To understand multidimensional voice within this creative, power-laden socio-rhetorical process and its context more fully, Bakhtin's famous long essay "Discourse in the Novel" (1975/81) is extremely helpful. In a discussion of theological writing from a socio-rhetorical perspective, Bahktin's essay advocates putting linguistic and rhetorical analysis of a discourse to good use,[95] which is what is offered here to gain more insight into the creation of a theological voice or voices.

What is particularly striking about Bahktin's argument is his notion of voice as part of this complex chain of utterances in which writers play responsive roles. He says that, despite the presentation of voice as singular and unified by philosophers of

[94] Jon Klancher, "Bakhtin's Rhetoric," in *Landmark Essays on Bakhtin, Rhetoric, and Writing*, ed. by Frank Farmer (New York: Routledge, 1998), 24.
[95] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 268-69.

language, linguists, and others, voice is always multiple.[96] For him, this multiplicity of voices, or heteroglossia, is the actual reality of language as it is practiced in the social world despite the necessary efforts we make to organize and unify language in order to hold it together.[97] Any writer must negotiate her writing task by negotiating many different possible voices in the face of those whom she is answering and those from whom she expects a response. The result of these writerly efforts is a battle between opposing forces within a discourse: the centripetal, which pulls the discourse together, and the centrifugal, which pushes it apart.[98] This process of construction and destruction within a discourse is not finite and limiting; instead, it is ongoing and unfolding. This generative conflict is one of the features that gives a discourse its creative and lively edge—a bit like the places underneath the earth's crust where two tectonic plates come together to both destroy and create new land. And it is in this push-and-pull scenario that the writer's voice(s) is (are) constructed.

Centripetal Forces

In order to understand how voice fits into this process, it is imperative to understand more fully how Bakhtin describes the process itself as a relationship between opposing forces. First, the centripetal forces at work in a discourse are those that tend toward the center. The word *centripetal* is indicative of this, coming from the Latin *centrum*, for the noun, "center," and *petere*, for the verb, "to seek."[99] Bakhtin writes that centripetal forces are those "that serve to unify and centralize the verbal ideological

[96] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 269.
[97] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 270-271.
[98] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 272-273.
[99] "centripetal, adj.", *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. by Lesley Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

world" and says that one of the markers of the centripetal forces is "unitary language [that] constitutes the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization."[100] Thus, unitary language in a discourse is, to some degree, an idealized notion that cannot be fully implemented, but it is still a language that seeks to bring ideas together under one umbrella, to create something held in common by practitioners. The centripetal force in language is a form of discourse that Bakhtin terms "authoritative," pointing out as examples language that is "religious, political, moral; the word of a father, of adults, and of teachers."[101] The purpose of authoritative language is to impose boundaries on potential fragmentation and to offer "a certain maximum of mutual understanding" between people.[102] Within the centripetal or authoritative discourse, voices are supposed to follow what is authoritative and aim to sound alike in order to foster communication.

Farmer points out that the centripetal, authoritative force of a discourse reflects "the received word, the word that does not allow any dialogizing challenge."[103] Another Bakhtinian composition theorist, Jon Klancher, describes the activity of this centripetal force or "received word" in the following way in his article "Bakhtin's Rhetoric" (1989): "The institutions of the school, the states, and the church enforce monologic languages as the voice of culture, the voice of authority, the voice of God ventriloquized through the literary critic, the politician, or the priest."[104] Any theology student or working theologian knows the pressures exerted by the authoritative discourse on her or his writing—whether it comes from other students, one's professor, the editors of a journal, or one's church.

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[100] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 270.
[101] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 342.
[102] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 270.
[103] Farmer, "Voice Reprised," 307.
[104] Klancher, "Bakhtin's Rhetoric," 24.

The notion of the monologic "received word," as Farmer calls it, is very familiar to experienced and novice theologians working with biblical materials and authoritative church documents in their writing. The ability to access and make decisions about how to assimilate the authoritative voice in discourse is necessary in establishing one's place within a particular theological discourse, for example. To ignore the received word is to ignore the wisdom of the past, a stance that theologians are unable to do and remain within the theological discourse. But to embrace the received word without any critical engagement is, in fact, to become a ventriloquist for someone else's rhetoric about God.

The authoritative word or voice is not valuable in and of itself because it can lead to a silencing of the discourse or to dangerous repetitions within the discourse due to lack of critical thought. The goal of employing the received word is not to find a final answer; instead, authoritative discourse is necessary to the larger process of communication with its ebbs and flows because it points to what people have thought and said and acted upon and helps the writer find a place to join in the conversation. Bakhtin sees the unitary language of authoritative discourse as a normative system that does not "constitute an abstract imperative" but is, instead, one of the "generative forces of linguistic life, forces that struggle to overcome the heteroglossia of language."[105] In the face of potential multiple voices and fragmentation, we need some organizing forces pulling us back together.

Centrifugal Forces

While these centripetal forces within the discourse serve to unify the conversation, the centrifugal forces express multiple voices that arise. The adjective

[105] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 270.

centrifugal conveys a relationship of refusal to the *centrum*, joining the "center" to the Latin verb *fugere*, "to flee."[106] In this theory of discourse participation, the centrifugal forces are the ones that reject the center. They are the linguistic forces that disorganize what we thought we knew, pushing against the centripetal and against the authoritative, received word. As Farmer suggests, the centrifugal forces do battle with the centripetal forces in "a requisite struggle—the challenge that ensues in the difficult process of appropriating someone else's words for one's own purposes and the corresponding struggle among the interior voices that vie for ascendancy in consciousness."[107] In order for a person to make sense of received theological wisdom so that she can determine how or whether to embrace it, she must test it against her life experience and other knowledge, wrestle with it in order to make it her own.

For Bakhtin, the centrifugal is marked by features that are "not only a static invariant of linguistic life, but also what insures its dynamics," which means that we always see centrifugal forces at play in language; additionally, Bakhtin says that two features, "stratification and heteroglossia, widen and deepen as long as language is alive and developing."[108] Thus, along with the centripetal forces, these centrifugal ones are crucial to any discourse that wants to allow experimentation to take place and new life to flourish. As will be pointed out in the analysis of two examples of theological writing, which come next in this chapter, some of the centrifugal forces in theological discourse that have gained a foothold include liberation paradigms that challenge the notions of power conveyed in politics and theology; feminist and womanist paradigms that confront

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[106] "centrifugal, adj.", *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. by Lesley Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
[107] Farmer, "Voice Reprised," 307.
[108] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 272.

Christian and cultural assumptions about gender and sexuality; and Black and Latino/a paradigms that read the biblical tradition and church history from the vantage point of the margins or borderlands. These multiple voices representing the centrifugal have taken hold in theological discourse in the last fifty or so years, pushing against the unifying centripetal forces that might silence them.

Bakhtin notes that part of the appeal of heteroglossia and the centrifugal forces is that they are key parts of the expression of discourses that writers find to be "internally persuasive," rather than authoritative.[109] As opposed to the authoritative word, internally persuasive discourse is initially "denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society (not by public opinion, nor by scholarly norms, nor by criticism), not even the legal code."[110] The centrifugal forces are keyed into new experiences and understandings and are seeking something new, another way to understand and express ideas to others. As Farmer puts it, internally persuasive discourse "is discourse that ranges freely among other discourses, that may be creatively recontextualized and that is capable of engaging other discourses in dialogue."[111] At some point, received wisdom is tested and tried by unfolding experience and ideas, resulting in tensions in writing.

But, even though it is often not publicly acknowledged, internally persuasive discourse does not belong to the writer or speaker alone because it does not happen in a vacuum. Bakhtin says that internally persuasive discourse is always "half-ours and half-someone else's" because the writer is not uttering or composing words alone at her

[109] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 342.
[110] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 342.
[111] Farmer, "Voice Reprised," 307.

desk.[112] Centrifugal discourse takes heteroglossic language, learned in the social world, and "organizes masses of our words from within."[113] This is the way that a theology student begins to make ideas and languages learned in classes her own. Bakhtin describes this process as one in which voice is situational because it is "developed, applied to new material, new conditions" as it "enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts" and "enters into an intense interaction, a struggle, with other internally persuasive discourses."[114] Thus, centrifugal forces have the tendency not only to push out against a center, a monologic authoritative language, but also to push against other centrifugal forces. This is why we need the centripetal forces to act in relation to the centrifugal—so that the whole system does not fragment into totally chaotic babblings. Without it, we could hardly hold a curriculum of theological education together.

One of the easiest ways to understand how these forces work to shape voice in theological writing is to look at discourse that demonstrates the struggle and makes it possible for the student to join "the chorus of voices"[115] in a discourse. For this purpose, this dissertation examines feminist theological discourse through a rhetorical and Bakhtinian lens to see how the centripetal and centrifugal collide and collaborate to generate a creative site out of which new ideas can emerge and be tested. This chapter now offers two powerful examples of the struggle between what Bakhtin describes as the authoritative and internally persuasive discourses in theological writing, noting the rhetorical features of these works as we proceed. The hope is that this investigation of the multiple voices developing in early feminist theological discourse will reveal the ways in

[112] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 344.
[113] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 345.
[114] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 345-346.
[115] Farmer, "Voice Reprised," 308.

which internally persuasive (or internally authoritative) discourses challenge those that are externally authoritative and enforced by institutions promoting the monologic voice. Theological writers such as those discussed here offer an approach to writing that confronts and reshapes the ongoing discourse by honoring their own sense of authority, grounded in embodied experience, to make choices in how they construct voices to join the chorus.

Valerie Saiving, 1960

The first feminist work that demonstrates the creation of voice through an engagement in the generative struggle between the centripetal and the centrifugal is Valerie Saiving's essay, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View" (1960). Originally published in the *Journal of Religion*, Saiving's article begins with the juxtaposition of two key words in her opening sentence, followed by a commentary on the tension between the two. She writes, "I am a student of theology; I am also a woman. Perhaps it strikes you as curious that I put these two assertions beside each other, as if to imply that one's sexual identity has some bearing on *his* theological views."[116] Not unlike feminist thinkers before her who contrasted women's position with patriarchal ecclesial teachings, Saiving starts off with an example of the centripetal (theology) in conflict with the centrifugal (woman). She uses her voice to announce these matter-of-factly in this first sentence: her internal sense of authority as a woman is valuable to assert when joining the authoritatively male discourse of theology.

[116] Valerie Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, edited by Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 25. Italics, mine.

Saiving launches her critical understanding of her own experience into a struggle with the assumptions previously made in the ongoing patriarchal theological conversation. In their feminist anthology *Womanspirit Rising*, editors Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow note the creative activity unleashed by this conflict in Saiving's writing, saying, "In putting the two statements together ["I am a student of theology; I am also a woman"], Saiving set forth what was to become the basic premise of all feminist theology: that the vision of the theologian is affected by the particularities of his or her experience as a male or female."[117] So much of feminist theology in the last fifty years has developed from this rhetorical moment in which Saiving asserted her voice as a centrifugal force, grounded in her internally persuasive discourse as a woman, and set it against the authoritative patriarchal discourse of the era.

It is worth noting that Saiving took this step into the struggle simultaneously as a White woman finishing a dissertation in theology at the University of Chicago, a very elite graduate program, and as a professor of undergraduates at the elite liberal arts schools, Hobart and William Smith Colleges in New York. From her vantage point as a highly educated, North American woman, Saving did not stop with juxtaposing the words theology and woman. Instead, she uses them to open up further inquiry, emphasizing the challenge to the centripetal dimension of the discourse by centrifugal forces in the rest of her essay. She makes it clear that this rhetorical move to identify herself as a woman and a theologian is driven by her own highly academic work in theology and her experience of alienation from theology that, she says, "has been written almost exclusively by

[117] Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, "The Essential Challenge: Does Theology Speak to Women's Experience?" in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, edited by Christ and Plaskow (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 20.

men."[118] Her essay then unfolds to "criticize, from the viewpoint of feminine experience, the estimate of the human situation made by certain contemporary theologians."[119] With these words, Saiving is pushing out from the center, which is the position from which she has received her theological education, in reaction to what she understands to be the centripetal forces of the authoritative theological discourse. To do so, she had to identify her own internally persuasive sense of authority and then orchestrate her voice as both part of and against the dominant discourse. She needed to engage the centripetal forces adequately enough while simultaneously stating her disagreement strongly enough on her own terms, in order to be published in a major theological journal run by the University of Chicago. Through this process of creative struggle, her voices emerged within a particular text.

Still, though it makes use of the language of the prevailing discourse, Saiving's entry into the theological conversation in this manner is not business-as-usual, for she is not going along with the male theologians. Rather, from its first sentences, her presentation represents an actual fragmentation of the dominant, authoritative discourse by calling into question one of the basic assumptions carried in that discourse—the assumption that men can speak on behalf of all humanity. Saiving chose to construct a double voice that could launch her essay by contrasting those two important words—*theology* and *woman*—in such a way that they set off the centrifugal forces that push toward the destruction of the status quo. She did so because the linguistic container holding theological discourse was too small for the realities of human life, something she

[118] Saiving, "The Human Situation," 25.
[119] Saiving, "The Human Situation," 25-26. In particular, she is arguing against assumptions made by the American theologian and public intellectual, Reinhold Niebhur, and Swedish theologian and Lutheran bishop, Anders Nygren.

could see from her vantage point on the margins of the elite center. The container needed expansion, and Saiving took the risk to name and voice a challenge to the external authoritative theological discourse by employing her own internally persuasive theological discourse. Due to her own need to tell a truthful story, she was willing to construct this voice that risked her position within the authoritative discourse. Amazingly, the *Journal of Religion* published it.

The Mud Flower Collective, 1985

Since Saiving's essay was published, feminist theology has proliferated and, with it, the push away from the authoritative center has expanded. We find a continuing effort to decenter the theological discourse in a variety of works, including *God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education* (1985), written by the Mud Flower Collective. In a creative move that goes against the grain of most academic publishing, this diverse group of feminist theologians from different races/ethnicities, cultures, denominations, and sexual orientations wrote together and wrote separately to produce a single critique of theological education from a feminist perspective. They did so with multiple voices. For example, in the first chapter, the Mud Flower Collective, comprised of Katie G. Cannon, Beverly W. Harrison, Carter Heyward, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Bess B. Johnson, Mary D. Pellauer, and Nancy D. Richardson, writes:

> At the outset what the Mud Flower Collective had in common, besides working in Christian seminaries, was a shared commitment and a shared complaint: Each of us is immersed in theological education, broadly conceived as her life's work, a personal vocational commitment. Each of us perceives also that Christian seminaries, in which the church's ministers and teachers often receive their formal theological education, are arenas in which lukewarm faith and uninspired scholarship are peddled. And we do not exempt ourselves from this charge. To the

> extent that we join regularly in this educational venture in bad faith without mounting protest, we are in complicity with pushers of theological mediocrity.[120]

These are the first lines of Chapter One, entitled "In Search of Common Ground." It seems that the common ground they are looking for is the one they share with each other, not the one assumed by the dominant cadre of theological educators and theologians.

Like Valerie Saiving, the members of the Mud Flower Collective throw wrenches into the tidy workings of the externally authoritative theological discourse machine as they assert their individual voices and their collective voice. In establishing their own common ground, they use phrases that offend others—such as blaming theological education for peddling "lukewarm faith and uninspired scholarship" in the guise of North American higher education. Clearly disinterested in making other friends by making nice, they call theological educators "pushers of theological mediocrity." The choice of the verb "peddled" and the noun "pushers" implies a comparison between theological education and illicit American drug culture that is suggestive of how "users" are lulled into states of being that are not linked to the clearest and best thinking. Beyond this general accusation, the members of the collective jointly implicate themselves as part of the problem; they forgive no one, let no one off the hook, including each other. The writers play with the forces of disintegration in standard discourse about theological education by dragging the whole centripetal enterprise into the mud—or, perhaps, by pointing out to us that the mud is where authoritative discourse lies. What they are doing is not pretty at first glance—it is grown up out of the messiness of this mud, as their collective name, Mud Flower, indicates.

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[120] The Mudflower Collective, *God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1985), 3-4.

But the Mud Flower Collective takes another step beyond this serious monkey business of playing with words and naming problems as they see them: they also write, at certain times, together as one and, at other times, separately, embracing and exemplifying the reality of heteroglossia in a whole new way. The Collective enhances their unusual stance toward writing by referring to themselves as a collective and using the word "we." Thus, they share one voice. But they also, even in this unified statement, repeat the phrase "each of us" twice, as if to emphasize individuality as well as collectivity—individual voices within the whole. This pronoun use is, in and of itself, an interesting employment of the centrifugal and centripetal in theological writing. Within one paragraph, they are juxtaposing the "we" of the unified authoritative voice they share and the "I" captured by the phrase "each of us" as the internally persuasive discourse of each member of the Collective. They write both as individual voices and as a collective voice, something that is not typically done or considered acceptable in academic theological writing.

Even further, rather than making the book a seamless unity of voice, these theological educators heighten the multiplicity of voices in the text by including snippets of conversations in which each speaker in the group is named and by breaking some chapters into sections in which each writer comments on a particular set of issues. Sometimes, they record conversations using generic names, such as Sister Lavender and Sister Gold, to represent positions rather than particular people.[121] And, in an even more unruly centrifugal step, they display to their readers the tensions within their own, shared internal discourse by devoting an entire chapter of searing letters between Kate Cannon

[121] See "Chapter Six: Trashing the Terrible, Titillating Lesbian: Dialoguing on Sexuality" in *God's Fierce Whimsy*, 180-195.

and Carter Heyward that challenge the notion that women of Color and White women see everything the same way even if they share a basic commitment to feminism.[122] This Cannon-Heyward epistolary dialogue includes "hot" issues such as racism and homophobia within feminist discourse itself. These are the places in which the authoritative voices of feminist theology as it has been articulated by White women are challenged by centripetal forces from within, threatening the unified presentation of a singular feminist voice or opinion about any particular issue.

These various examples of voice, taken together, demonstrate how *God's Fierce Whimsy* is an extraordinary example of the way in which heteroglossia operates in the collision of the centripetal and the centrifugal. This is seen in the conflict between the centripetal, authoritative voices of theological educators and the centrifugal, internally persuasive feminist voices of the writers. It is also demonstrated by the struggle between the centripetal, authoritative voices of mainline, White, heterosexist feminist discourse and the centrifugal, internally persuasive voices of individual feminist writers who disagree with some of the assumptions masked in authoritative feminist discourse. Using these various voices, the book builds on the tensions created by the struggle between these two forces, never letting the writers or the readers relax and forcing us into the discomforting position of encountering the Collective's critique at every turn.

The upshot of using Bakhtin's tools and the features of the rhetorical triangle to explore these two examples of feminist theological discourse is that we, as theological educators, can begin to see the creative ways that theological writers have navigated the challenge of bringing their experience and knowledge to bear—and how they construct

[122] See "Chapter Two: Can We Be Different But Not Alienated? An Exchange of Letters" in *God's Fierce Whimsy*, 35-59.

new voices in the process. These writers' solutions to the problem of wrestling the tensions between their internally persuasive discourses and the external authoritative, received discourses of the theological field point us in the direction of how to assist students who are grappling with these issues within the academy, where students' power is limited and the pressures are great.

In teaching theological writing, I speak frankly with graduate students in theology about the tensions they are experiencing, and I urge them to engage with these tensions between the centripetal and centrifugal and to experiment with heteroglossia so that they might develop a strong rhetorical consicousness. Instead of asking them to conform to theological discourse at every turn, I have encouraged them to test or try out different approaches to writing various projects and to talk with their professors about their experimentation, so they can find out what works and what does not as they try to communicate their ideas to others. While it is important for students to learn the authoritative discourse of a particular theological movement like feminism, a student may want or need to experiment with the borders of this authoritative feminist theological discourse to gain a better sense of where she fits in (or does not fit in). This process can unfold in simple ways—including by thinking clearly and critically about one's immediate/primary, secondary, and tertiary audiences; determining if one's own vocabulary diverges from or agrees with the dominant definitions of key words; and discerning one's present purpose in writing a class essay, a sermon, or any other piece of writing. Sometimes, the result is not good and the student fails to communicate well, but this, too, is a learning opportunity. This pedagogical approach means encouraging graduate students to make critically informed choices as writers about how to weave

together various externally authoritative discourses and their own internally persuasive discourse into some kind of coherent whole that communicates effectively to their readers—and to recognize and take responsibility for their successes and their failures.

V. *Writing As Constructing: The Generative Struggle of Learning in Theological Education*

> Some get tired of the same story / and quit speaking; / […] / What will we learn today? / There should be an answer, / and it should / change.
>
> ~ Naomi Shihab Nye[123]

While theology students like Segura, Chalmers, Brumfield, Ilbodou, and Ibarra may experience writing as a loss of voice, there is the possibility that they can also experience academic writing as an opportunity to create their own voices. Rather than relying solely on techniques of repetition and demonstration in their theological writing, they might be guided to become aware of the various voices they encounter and then to construct their own heteroglossic voices in response to the ongoing theological discourse. Some who do not feel they have anything meaningful to add to the chorus of voices in conversation may "get tired of the same story / and quit speaking," as the poet Nye worries. Theological educators can assist them in moving through the sense of loss and frustration that attends any struggle by helping them gain rhetorical/analytical tools for writing new stories and developing new answers for the time and places that we live in. Students will then be better equipped by understanding the layers of rhetorical complexity that attend writing for the three theological publics of the church, the academy, and wider society. We can help them move from the despairing statement, "I have lost my voice," to the creative response of, "I have made a new voice."

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[123] Naomi Shihab Nye, "Telling the Story," 132-133. See the full poem in Appendix F.

It is crucial for theological educators to embrace the discursive tensions in our communications and to work with our students so that they will be prepared to go as ministers into the pluralistic world in which we live. Our students are going out to be priests and activists, educators and spiritual directors, pastoral caregivers and preachers in a world that is changing so fast that we can scarcely grasp what is happening; they are facing doing their work in a context like no other and need the all the tools we can offer to find their way toward doing good work in relation to other people. We must encourage our theology students to engage in the "generative struggle"[124] in and through writing as they negotiate the conflicts between externally authoritative discourses and their internally persuasive discourses in order to turn their ideas and their talents out beyond the academy and into the world and the church. This is a process of helping them construct voices that engage in some meaningful way with the externally authoritative discourses even as they seek to articulate their internally persuasive discourses to others.

As we do so, theological educators must ponder the overlapping conceptions of voice that Bakhtin and rhetorical thinkers offer us. First, we must teach students from an understanding of voice as a process of negotiating social relationships that reflect negotiations of power; this includes a conscious layering of the various rhetorical dimensions of writing (writer, audiences, subject matter, text, and voice) in a particular context. Second, we must understand and practice voice as a way of understanding the relationality of writing, which allows us to respond to previous members of these discourses and to anticipate future conversation partners who might be responsive to us. Third, we must understand the conscious construction of voice(s) as a way for students to be responsive to the demands of each particular academic writing project assigned to

[124] Farmer, "Voice Reprised," 316.

them. Fourth, we must accept that voice itself is borne of generative struggle, an ongoing process resulting, in all likelihood, in multiple voices.

An awareness of voice(s) in our own and others' writing allows us to acknowledge the something that is "held between us" in written discourse so that we and our students might understand our writing to be a deeply social activity rich in the potential to connect us to (or disconnect us from) others, to ourselves, to the world, to ideas, and to God. As theological educators, we must teach students to construct their own voices, not ours or someone else's. They must do this new thing instead of simply internalizing the authoritative theological discourse to become masterful copyists. To do otherwise is to assist our students, our future ministers and theologians, and theology itself in becoming less and less relevant. To do otherwise would be to choke students' own voices in their throats, stifling creativity not only of each one of them as a writer, but also of the ongoing theological discourse itself. What is at stake is the future of our students' vocational work, the health of the communities that they serve in various capacities, and the viability of theological discourse itself.

The next chapters take up the challenge of thinking more deeply about the negotiations of power that accompany the construction of voice in this struggle between the centripetal and centrifugal in theological writing, for this is not a struggle without real risk for the writer. In particular, Chapter Three examines voice from the vantage point of Black feminist/womanist intersectional theory, which employs a range of intellectual resources to analyze power and authority. In this case, the focus is specifically upon student voices as they emerge within theological education in North America. The student of theology finds herself in a very complex and often very difficult position as a

writer, given the power dynamics within the academy and the role of the authoritative word in academic theological writing. This fraught context makes the creation and orchestration of voices by students quite challenging. Intersectional theory is helpful in unpacking the relevant features of academic life for those of us who wish to assist students in developing their voices and in determining how best to employ those voices once they have graduated and gone into their various careers and vocations. This next step in the larger argument will, hopefully, help us toward encouraging students to tell a new story, to create a new voice, to participate in enlivening theological discourse, and to enrich the lives of those it is intended to benefit. It will also push us, as theological educators, toward changing the story of writing within theological education for the benefit of our students, the church, wider society, and the academy itself.

Chapter Three

Examining the Hidden Complexities of Voice: An Intersectional Analysis of Power in Writing Practical Theology for the Church, Academy, and Society

> We needed to bring our voices to the table and to make sure that our voices are heard.
>
> ~ Jacquelyn Grant[125]

I. *Constructing Voices: The Necessity for Diverse Voices in the Three Publics*

One of the great gifts of admitting a diverse group of students like Chema Segura, Cathy Chalmers, Dawnn Brumfield, Justin Ilboudo, and Ana Ibarra to study theology in higher education institutions is that the work of transformation and liberation can be explored and undertaken together and from different perspectives, resulting in the construction of powerful voices for the three publics of the church, the academy, and wider society. North American womanist theologian Jacquelyn Grant remembers her experience as a Black woman student studying with other Black women in theological education in the following way:

> What we knew was that we were doing a necessary work. It was clear that our issues were not being addressed in the feminist movement in any significant way. It was clear that our issues were not being addressed in the black theological movement in any significant way. And therefore it was additionally clear that we needed to envoice black women; we needed to bring our voices to the table and to make sure that our voices are heard. Liberation cannot become a reality as long as people within our communities are discriminated against, as long as they are depressed and suppressed and oppressed. In fact, we must be able to move beyond those single issues and develop real liberation for all of God's people.[126]

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[125] Jacquelyn Grant, interview in "Journey to Liberation: The Legacy of Womanist Theology and Womanist Ethics at Union Theological Seminary." [12 minute version] Dir. Anika Gibbons. April 2014. http://origin-www.new.livestream.com/accounts/6118835/events/2903096/videos/47428046

[126] More of Grant's interview in "Journey to Liberation."

Grant, who was the first Black woman to earn her doctorate in systematic theology at New York's Union Theological Seminary (1983), expresses and exemplifies the importance of marginalized persons having a theological voice not just in society or in the church, but also within the academy where conversing, thinking, and writing about theology is done.

Grant also reminds us that theological and ministerial work is grounded in a person's experience and in her shared experiences with others—and that this work has everything to do with expressing and listening to voices. She shows us why it is vital to work on developing voice as a student. Presumably, an excellent place for a nascent theologian/minister to deepen her or his learning about how to share and listen to voices continues to be in the seminary, divinity school, or school of theology and ministry. If theological educators fail to guide students from educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds (like Grant and those whose voices were shared in Chapter One) to construct viable public voices, then our students' work will be hampered, as will the work of the church and the progression of theological discourse itself. It is crucial for those of us teaching and leading in theological education in 2015 to take up writing as one of the key pedagogical tools that can assist students to transform into the ministers, teachers, thinkers, pastoral caregivers, and activists they are called to be. If we begin to see writing as a way to lead students through the process of learning rather than as a product to judge at the end of the process, our students will benefit, and so will the three publics of theology.

This dissertation has advanced the argument for a new pedagogy of writing theology first by describing in Chapter One the challenges that twenty-first century

graduate student writers from non-dominant backgrounds face in constructing theological voices in a rapidly changing and diverse context. Then, Chapter Two analyzed the socio-rhetorical context of theological writing and voice in North American theological education using tools from composition theory and Bakhtinian linguistics. Now, this third chapter introduces additional analytical tools into the conversation about voice in writing. It accomplishes this goal by using intersectional theory to examine two examples of voice in theological writing by a highly skilled theological writer, Desmond Tutu. The rationale for this chapter is to help theological educators envision how intentionally constructed theological voices—in this case, different voices of the same writer, Tutu—can serve the church, the academy, and the world in powerful and unexpected ways. Within the apartheid system that cast him as a lesser human, even as sub-human, Tutu constructed a nuanced prophetic voice that advocated radical change for equality in the highly racist society of South Africa while showing compassion for all members of that society, including those enforcing the racist system. While not all theological educators and students may agree with Tutu's ideas, his process of developing a strong, public and prophetic voice despite working under intense oppression within the apartheid system is a provocative model for us to consider as we move forward in helping our students to construct their own voices.

Coming from multiple positions in theological and political discourse as a Black African[127] man in a predominantly White Anglican Church, a predominantly White

[127] For the purposes of this chapter, all references to race/ethnicity continue to be capitalized in order to emphasize these socially constructed categories and to be consistent. Some of the writers included here do not follow this practice, and their usage will be retained in direct quotations from their writing. Additionally, when referring to the South African context, Black, African, Black African, and Black South African are used interchangeably. Additionally, White, Afrikaner, and White South African are also used interchangeably.

theological academic discourse, and a racist apartheid state, Tutu was able to use intentionally both his socio-political position as both a member of an oppressed group and a prominent leader with ecclesial power to construct a prophetic voice that helped to reconfigure not only a discourse but, indeed, an entire society. His writing serves as a model for theological educators who wish to guide students toward the construction of their own writers' voices as ministers and theologians for a broken world that desperately needs them.

Like Grant, Tutu is a theological thinker who understands being silenced and speaking, and he has continually sought to bring the voices of marginalized others, including his own, to the table so that they might be heard in South African society and internationally. As a theology professor and Anglican priest, Tutu would eventually become the Archbishop of Cape Town, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, and the Chairman of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission due to his ability to construct a multi-faceted prophetic voice where previously there were silences. But if we are to hear his voice as a model for constructing a writer's voice, theological educators and students might ask, How does Tutu construct this prophetic public voice? This third chapter explores the construction of voice in theological writing by examining the power dynamics at play in the process of construction. This investigation allows further refinement of the concept and uses of voice by employing intersectional theory to analyze Tutu's changing identity as a leader and, then, to analyze his voice in two writings, one a letter and the other an academic theological essay, both of them published in 1976 during an intensification of the struggle against the government-imposed apartheid system. Against the backdrop of Tutu's life, the two documents demonstrate very different,

complex aspects of his prophetic voice even though the immediate context was the same. Tutu chose this multi-stranded voice for specific purposes in relation to the situation at hand, including his engagement with the structures of power and authority in the relevant discourses. Like Grant, he found a way to bring his voice to the table in pursuit of liberation.

The first major part of this chapter, entitled "Intersectional Theory and the Study of Theological Voice," has two sections with the first defining intersectional theory and describing its use here as a lens for contemplating voice in theological writing with attention to the power relations important in voice construction. This part of the chapter ends with a narrative of Tutu's life from an intersectional point of view, taking into consideration how his life story—and eventually, his voice—were shaped by his life-long negotiations with the domains of power within the matrix of power and oppression.

The next major part of this chapter, entitled "An Analysis of Tutu's Theological Writings," is brings together the Rhetorical Model for Theological Writing,[128] developed in Chapter Two, with intersectional insights about power in order to gain a richer understanding of Tutu's construction of his nuanced prophetic voice in his theological writings. The study reveals a process of developing a multi-layered voice through responsive engagement with ideas and people in an unfolding context where significant change was needed to alleviate state-enforced abuses, extreme human suffering, and systemic injustice. The conclusion of the chapter, entitled "Speaking to the Three Publics: Bringing New Voices to the Table through Writing," draws the discussion to a close by reflecting on Tutu's construction of a public prophetic voice in relation to writing in theological education.

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[128] See Figure 1 in Appendix E for a model of A Rhetorical Triangle for Theological Writing.

As a man who developed a prophetic voice during and after the apartheid era, Tutu is a theologian and minister whose writing demonstrates his manifold efforts to be simultaneously prophetic and compassionate, a tightrope walk that is instructive for nascent theological writers. While Tutu was not a perfect man or perfect leader, as his theological ideas and practices have been challenged by other theologians, ministers, and social justice activists, he is very well known and leaves a written legacy of texts that allow us to trace the construction of his complex theological voice from within a pressured matrix of oppression and domination. The goal of this chapter, then, is to listen to Tutu's voice in order to chart out some of the pliable features of voice that can be shared with students to assist with the development of their voices in and through theological writing as they learn about the public dimensions of their roles as leaders and thinkers in church, society, and the academy.

II. *Intersectional Theory and the Study of Theological Voice*

A. *Intersectional Theory: Definition & Background*

Intersectional theory is a lens for societal and self analysis that has been pioneered by Black women thinkers, particularly those in law, education, and social work since at least the 1970s. Embracing complexity rather than working with ideas as if they are binaries,[129] intersectional theory aims to analyze the silences and oppressions; to demarcate the institutions and public spaces in which individuals are misrepresented, overlooked, and/or unheard; and to offer some possible remedies for alleviating injustices people experience within societal institutions. Employing intersectional theory for

[129] For more on the epistemological assumptions underlying intersectionality theory, see Patricia Hill Collins' book, *Black Feminist Thought* (2000), and Leslie McCall's article, "The Complexity of Intersectionality" (2005).

thinking about theological writing and undertaking theological education is helpful for three reasons: first, because intersectionality can help us see the hidden dimensions of oppression inside of social structures like universities and churches, which limit student or novice voices; second, because intersectional theory offers a corrective to the reductive institutional and ideological traditions that mask differences of gender, race, class, sexual orientation and posit a mono-voice as sufficient for all; and, third, because intersectional theory can assist us in making connections between writing as a social activity and our lived experience in the world, the church, and the academy.

As Black feminists and womanists like Angela Davis and bell hooks and others engaged with the insights and limitations of feminist theory, particularly standpoint theory,[130] they developed what would eventually be called intersectional theory. These early intersectional scholars employed common methods from sociology and other fields along with basic epistemological assumptions grounded in Black women's experience to analyze and interrogate structures of oppressive power. In the Preface to the second edition of her well-known *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (1984/2000), hooks reflects on how these thinkers expanded and refocused feminist standpoint theory, saying that "looking at the interlocking nature of gender, race, and class was the perspective that changed the direction of feminist thought."[131] Multi-faceted examinations of race, class, and gender in relation to each other allowed lawyers, legal theorists, and researchers to

[130] Feminist standpoint theory was pioneered by Dorothy Smith, Nancy Hartsock, and Patricia Hill Collins, amongst others. As a theory that privileges lived experience, standpoint theory has its roots in Marxist thought and understands women's experiences, in particular, to be its epistemological starting point. Intersectional theorists (including Collins) saw flaws in standpoint theory, including its over-identification with the experience of White, middle class, heterosexual women to the exclusion of others and the tendency of researchers to employ the concept of standpoint as a static, rather than shifting or malleable, category (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 28).

[131] bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1984/2000), xii.

see previously invisible experiences of oppression and to theorize correctives to them. Although in the 1984 edition of *Feminist Theory*, hooks never calls what she's doing "intersectional theory," her focus is on investigating where race, class, and gender collide with each other in people's lives to form a matrix of domination.[132] In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990/2000),[133] Collins notes that the "reformist" and "revolutionary" nature of this approach derives from its rootedness in the lives of "African-American intellectuals who were nurtured in social conditions of racial segregation" and who were all "in some way affected by intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class."[134] Unseen and unheard by other theories and theorists, Black women developed their own theory in order to gain a better understanding of the manifold ways in which power is used to silence and oppress some people and give advantage to others.

The thinker who is often credited with coalescing these ideas into an identifiable theory with a name is legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw, who uses the term "intersectionality" in her 1989 essay, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," for the *University of Chicago Legal Forum* and in her 1991 essay for the *Stanford Law Review*, entitled "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." Crenshaw's scholarly intersectional work in "Mapping the Margins" draws on sociological data about violence in the lives of

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[132] Patricia Hill Collins employs the phrase "matrix of domination" in her work, *Black Feminist Thought* (1990/2000), and seems to have been the first to use the term.
[133] While Collins' *Black Feminist Thought* was first published in 1990, the edition being used for this chapter is the second, published in 2000.
[134] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 15.

women of color, economic studies of people of color, traditions of identity politics in the North American context, critical race theory, feminist and womanist writing and activism (including feminist legal theory), race and gender studies, and a wide range of laws and legal decisions. She turns to these interdisciplinary materials to investigate "the various ways in which race and gender [and economics] intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color."[135]

Despite the ability of intersectional theory to describe the complexity of human experience within systems of power and oppression, Crenshaw warns of its limitations. She writes that intersectionality is not "some new, totalizing theory of identity," nor is it the only approach for addressing the problems she explores.[136] Instead, intersectional theory provides a way for us to highlight "the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed."[137] The complexity of current students' experiences as writers in theological education points to the importance of employing these multiple grounds of identity to understand the richness of good theological writing, as the individual writer is always writing in a complex social context that places demands and limitations on her and offers opportunities for creativity and invention. By using this interdisciplinary approach in order to gain a more multi-faceted understanding of voice as constructed in a social context, theological educators can better prepare students of theology and ministry to be productive, creative, and publicly engaged members of society, the church, and the academy. Intersectional theory helps us

[135] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," in *Stanford Law Review*, 1244. I add economics in brackets because, although Crenshaw does not list it here, her analysis includes class issues throughout.
[136] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1244.
[137] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1245.

to understand writing and voice as social, rather than individual, aspects of theological work.

B. *Power and the Matrix of Domination*

An important insight that an intersectional approach brings to the table is its understanding of power, which is useful for theological educators to consider as we create a space in which students can develop their voices. In *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins writes that

> Black feminist thought fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how we think about unjust power relations. By embracing a paradigm of intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation, as well as Black women's individual and collective agency within them, Black feminist thought reconceptualizes the social relations of domination and resistance.[138]

Intersectional thinkers do not understand power in human relationships as something that turns on a single axis as a binary pair of oppressions (White versus Black, male versus female, haves versus have nots, straight versus gay). Instead, intersectional analysts see power as "an intangible entity that circulates within a particular matrix of domination and to which individuals stand in varying relationships" by "emphasiz[ing] how individual subjectivity frames human actions within" this matrix.[139] Intersectional theory teaches theological writers that the matrix constrains different individuals' voices in different ways due to their engagements with the various domains of power within the matrix. Thus, the question we should be asking is not, exactly, who has power and who does not have it, as if power were a poker chip in a zero sum game that balances equal gains against equal losses.

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[138] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 291-92.
[139] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 292.

Intersectional thinkers propose that power is exercised and negotiated in ongoing social and political relationships rather than a static thing held by one person or another.[140] Thus, intersectional inquiry is not about figuring out who is in and who is out, as if these categories are fixed and impermeable. Based on these insights of intersectional scholars about power, the questions that theological writers must ask include, What is a person's relationship to others and to the structures of power and domination in the society? How do these relationships in the social world shift depending on the situation or circumstance? How does a theological writer construct a voice amidst the moving matrix of power and oppression? What spaces are there for resistance and creativity in which power can be exercised in more positive ways?[141] This intersectional conceptualization of power is useful for theological writers at all levels because it can help us consider where we currently relate to the various dimensions of the matrix of domination and oppression. In this study, this intersectional understanding of power can help us see opportunities for generative struggle in and through the construction of our writing voices.

Collins frames the matrix of domination in terms of four domains in which power is exercised. These are: 1) *the structural domain*, which includes the social organization of institutions (banks, health care, the media, the legal system, industry, education at all levels, insurance, etc.) in ways that replicate the processes of subordination[142]; 2) *the disciplinary domain*, which involves the bureaucratic management of power relations using surveillance and hierarchies to mask the intersectional effects of multiple

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[140] For a review of unfolding definitions of power in feminist theory, including intersectional theory, see bell hooks' Chapter 6 in *Feminist Theory From Margin to Center*, entitled "Changing Perspectives on Power," 84-95.
[141] See hooks' "Changing Perspectives on Power" for feminists' critiques of power as only a tool for domination and oppression.
[142] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 295.

oppressions[143]; 3) *the hegemonic domain*, which justifies practices within the structural and disciplinary domains through selective employment of cultural and ideological features[144]; and 4) *the interpersonal domain*, which has to do with unseen features of everyday life and interpersonal relationships.[145] This four-part matrix is helpful in understanding the construction of theological voice because it further enables us to consider the ways in which a writer's voice is constructed within each domain and across these various domains.

C. *The Object(s) of Analysis*

One of the key features of intersectional theory is that it is flexible and can employ different methods and data sets, giving researchers the ability to investigate social structures as well as to explore individuals' identities using the dimensions of race, class, sexuality, gender, nationality, and more. Collins cautions intersectional theorists about the tendency for the intersectional "object of analysis" to turn "inward, to the level of personal identity narratives, in part, because intersectionality can be grasped far more easily when constructing one's own autobiography."[146] This is because the individual is more easily understood than complex societal systems. Collins adds that, in the United States, this autobiographical turn in intersectional analysis "reflects the shift […] away from social structural analyses of social problems, for example, the role of schools, prisons, and workplace practices in producing poverty, and the growing rejection of

[143] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 299.
[144] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 302.
[145] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 306-07.
[146] Patricia Hill Collins, Foreword, in *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender In Theory, Policy, and Practice*, ed. by Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers U Press, 2009), ix.

institutional responses to social inequalities"—all of which leads to an "erasure of social structure."[147] I share Collins' concern about blind spots in our scholarship and have noticed in my own thinking a tendency to consider intersectionality to be an autobiographical or biographical matter for individual theology students to consider as they study and write.

With Collins' cautions in mind, I argue that it is possible to offer an intersectional approach that takes seriously both the individual narrative and the various domains of the matrix of oppression in order to examine the links between the two. The way forward is to understand how an individual's narrative unfolds in relation to the four domains of power within the matrix of oppression and domination to shape the voice that he or she constructs. The intersectional analytical path followed here focuses on Tutu's development as a theological writer by uncovering intersectional connections between his individual experience as a Black South African and the social, institutional, ideational, and relational structures that supported the domains of power in the thoroughly segregated South African society of the 1970s. Tutu's personal life story is inextricably connected to larger societal systems at work, which is what the next section of this chapter shows. The point of this exercise is to demonstrate of the usefulness of the intersectional approach in considering voice in theological writing, which employs ideas from Collins' four domains to examine Tutu's autobiography and voice as a theological writer in a particular socio-political context of power during a particular moment in South Africa's history.

The short- and long-term effects of governmentally-enforced institutional racism and poverty in apartheid South African society are well known, but this chapter aims to

[147] Collins, Foreword, ix.

show how a particular South African national political discourse that displays certain assumptions about the nature and education of the human being combines in Tutu's thinking and practice with his understanding of Anglican theology, with the emerging Black Consciousness movement of the 1960s and 70s, and with Black theology to mutually inform Tutu's complex expression of ideas in two different documents from 1976. This interaction of these different dimensions of human thought and practice work together to create Tutu's theological voices in different texts. Tutu constructed his complex prophetic voice for the church, the academy, and wider society in and through an ongoing negotiation of power relations as he engaged with individuals and the matrix of dominance and oppression in his society.

Because of Tutu's identity in terms of race, gender, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, class, ability to travel, and education—and because of his supple engagement with the domains of power within the matrix of domination—he had access to discourses that other Black Africans[148] did not have. This access enabled him to draw together these various discourses into writings that allowed him to construct a nuanced prophetic voice as a person oppressed by racist society who was also a religious and political leader with a major role in challenging and changing the apartheid government's use of power to order the lives of its citizens, especially all of those who were not White. The central

[148] Though this dissertation looks primarily at the oppression of the Black African population by the White population, race issues in South Africa were and are much more complicated than this, as the White supremacist government had developed its own system of labeling people. Using the category of race as it had been developed during the era of colonization from the seventeenth century on, the apartheid government had classified the South African population into four groups: 1) Whites—which included two main groups: a) Afrikaners, who were Afrikaans-speaking people, primarily the descendants of Dutch colonists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and b) English-speaking descendants of other European nations, including England; 2) Natives—also called Africans or Bantus by the government, which included persons from native South African cultural-linguistic groups, including Zulus, Xhosas, and many others; 3) Indians or Asians—who were descendants of Indian immigrants, predominantly; and 4) Coloreds—who were persons of mixed racial origins.

pedagogical learning from this exercise points toward the way in which a theological writer constructs a voice that negotiates socio-political constraints, locates opportunities for creativity, and presents itself as nuanced and powerful in its advocacy for change in response to an oppressive societal context. Theological educators would benefit from considering ways in which we might foster in our students this dynamically creative process of constructing voices so that they might be able to continue the work of local and global justice that Tutu and others have begun.

D. *The Theological Writer in His Context: Desmond Tutu*

The present chapter aims to examine the layers of complexity in a theological voice by bringing intersectional insights into conversation with the rhetorical model introduced in the previous chapter. This approach analyzes Tutu's intersectional identity as it developed within a particular socio-rhetorical context and influenced his writer's voice; then, part three of the chapter focuses on two of his earlier writings to exemplify the multiple dimensions of voice that a single theological writer can develop when she or he is clear about the various rhetorical and intersectional dimensions of the writing task at hand. This section employs the basic terminology of the rhetorical triangle introduced in Chapter Two—including the terms text, context, audience(s), subject matter, and writer—as an organizational framework, allowing the intersectional investigation to probe more thoroughly the matter of voice and the dynamics of power at play in the creation and communication of that voice.

As this very brief intersectional analysis of Tutu's individual identity reveals, Tutu's position as a writer, theologian, and minister was complex from the moment he

was born, well before he undertook any of his public roles and developed his prophetic voice. In fact, as this analysis aims to show, Tutu was able to construct his theological voice to be effective in particular situations and a shifting context precisely because of the way in which his life history and experiences met the matrix of power and domination in his writing. Although he became an internationally famous figure with access to heads of state and the ability to speak to a global audience about matters of concern to him, Tutu began life as a Black child in a family of educators, and his entire life trajectory was shaped by a matrix of racial oppression that limited where he lived and worked, hampered his ability to grow and thrive, and suppressed his voice for many years. His life experience within this matrix is instructive for theological educators and students because it offers a glimpse of the challenges that some theological writers face as they seek to construct a theological voice that can be heard.

1. *Tutu's Childhood: Experiences of Oppression under Apartheid Rule*

Tutu experienced tribal, cultural, and linguistic diversity from the time he was born in 1931 in the town of Klerksdorp situated in the North West Province of South Africa. His family was a culturally and linguistically mixed family of educators.[149] His mother was from a Sotho-Tswana language group called the Motswana, and his father spoke Xhosa and was from the Nguni people, who had been successful warriors prior to

[149] Much of this story of Tutu's life as it is related here may be found in *Rabble-Rouser for Peace* (2006), written by Tutu's former press secretary and personal assistant, John Allen. Other books and materials used to construct this narrative include Tutu's semi-autobiographical book *Made for Goodness: And Why This Makes All the Difference* (2010), written with his daughter, Mpho Tutu; Michael Battle's book on Tutu's theology, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (2009)*;* current information on Tutu on the Nobel Prize website; and Allen's anthology of Tutu's early writings, *The Rainbow People of God* (1994). Background reading about South African society and attitudes that has informed this section include Nigel Worden's *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy* (2012), and Alan Paton's novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948/1987).

the arrival of European colonists in the seventeenth century.[150] Tutu was, thus, raised as a Xhosa, learning his father's language in the home according to the custom, learning English in missionary schools and other languages as he encountered them, and benefitting by (and being watched closely because of) being the son of an esteemed school leader. Even before the apartheid government was fully established in 1948 with the election of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party, the family moved around quite a bit due to governmental policies that pressured or even forced Black African families to move into less desirable areas. This pattern of moving Africans at the whim of the White-led government is just one way that the racialized matrix of domination and oppression operated to destabilize Black individuals, families, and communities. It also supported an ideology of White supremacy that Black Africans, including Tutu, had a difficult time overcoming in their own personal and political lives. Eventually, Tutu would have to confront this ideology and the practices that flowed from it as he sought to construct a prophetic public voice to advocate for change in South African society.

From childhood, the experience of racial segregation and poverty formed and informed Tutu's self-understanding and began to shape his theological vision. In *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, the authorized biography by John Allen, Tutu recalls an experience of relating to White children during his early childhood that demonstrates the powerful nature of the hegemonic domain of power in the thought-world of Black Africans who were bound in a particular relationship to the White supremacist matrix of oppression. Tutu tells Allen,

> Once I saw black children scavenging in the dustbins of the white school for sandwiches which the children had thrown away after their break. [The government provided school lunches for whites.] I didn't know the

[150] Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, 10-13.

> political reasons for that. It just seemed strange that they could throw away perfectly good fruit and sandwiches.
>
> I just thought life was organized in such a way that white people lived in the nice part, you lived in the township, and that was how God organized it. You knew you had to enter the post office through a separate entrance and generally get treated like dirt. You didn't question it.[151]

Tutu's experience offers a good example of how children's self-understandings and theological ideas were shaped by events unfolding in the interpersonal domain of their everyday interactions at school, at home, and in the neighborhood. Even children were constrained across racial and class lines, as their daily lives intersected with the structural and disciplinary domains of government and adult social-political hierarchies. As a child, Tutu lived in relation to the matrix of domination and oppression in such a way that, although he could identify iniquities, he had to learn to rationalize the experience of disenfranchisement and disparity. As a faithful Christian child, he did so using theological means, coming to the conclusion that, if Black Africans were "treated like dirt," God must intend it to be that way. Over time, though, he would come to question the conclusions he reached but could not question as a child, leading to his development as an anti-apartheid leader and his stance as a person who would use his voice to challenge the larger systems embedded in the matrix of domination that equated some people with dirt while others were treated as full human beings. This experience of being caught within systems created and enforced by White adults would influence Tutu's later construction of his theological voice as he grappled with his relationship with God and other human beings during his adulthood.

Like many other Blacks in apartheid South Africa, Tutu suffered diseases and a serious injury while growing up. He had polio as a very young child, experienced serious

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[151] Tutu, qtd. in Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, 23. Material in brackets, Allen's.

burns as a result of an accident with a cooking fire later, and then had tuberculosis as a teenager. Diseases like polio and TB ran rampant through Black communities in South Africa during the 1940s due to poor living conditions and substandard medical care. Allen says that, while living in a Black township established by the apartheid regime, Tutu contracted polio before the vaccine was developed and where many communicable diseases ran unchecked due to irregular sanitation collection by government employees and poor utility infrastructures.[152] Tuberculosis, Allen explains, was an "epidemic linked to South Africa's rapid industrial growth and its failure to provide proper housing for black workers" in rapidly expanding, overcrowded cities where poverty and malnutrition reigned.[153] The health issues that Tutu faced and overcame were directly related to the ways in which the racially segregated structural domain of power (in the form of the substandard health care system, poor urban development, and lack of government services) intersected with the disciplinary domain (through the government bureaucracy that slowed down the sanitation schedule and made getting medical attention difficult) to effect real outcomes for Tutu in the interpersonal domain. Still, he was a feisty (and lucky) child, and, despite some lingering effects from his illnesses and injury, he recovered from each health problem determined to succeed in school, involved in his church community, and active with other boys in games and play.

These experiences of illness and recovery would shape Tutu's voice as one who would come to speak forcefully and publicly in relation to the matrix of domination and oppression; he had personal experience of suffering because of his being oppressed as a Black African, and this would inform him for a lifetime of very public anti-apartheid

[152] Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, 19.
[153] Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, 45.

activism. As he grew into adulthood, Tutu became more and more conscious of the constraining effects of the matrix of oppression and domination upon him, and this growing awareness had a role in his construction of a prophetic voice that could be heard in the public sphere in South Africa. Tutu's awareness of his relationship to the matrix and of the constraints upon him as a Black man is a significant point of interest for theological educators who wish to support students as they develop their voices. Students must become aware of their own relations with the matrix of oppression and domination as they experiment with dimensions of their voices for speaking and writing in the various contexts in which they feel called to work.

2. *Tutu's Early Adulthood in South Africa: From Teaching to Ministering*

Like his father before him, Tutu initially trained at a teacher's college to be a public school teacher and principal. However, he left teaching after just a few years when the apartheid government began to take control over all aspects of the schools. The racist ideology that compelled Afrikaner leaders to this exertion of power during the 1940s and beyond is exemplified in the words of Hendrik Verwoerd, who in the 1950s was the minister of Bantu Education, which had been set up to oversee the education of Black Africans. At one point, Verwoerd told the South African Parliament that Africans (also called Bantus or Natives in the apartheid racial categorization scheme) were incapable of directing themselves. He said:

> The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor…Until now he has been subjected to a school system which

> drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze.[154]

This speech is indicative of a long-standing White ideology that established Black Africans' "place" in society as manual laborers who needed education only so that they might be controlled and directed. Africans were sheep in need of a shepherd, and that overseer would be the White-dominated apartheid government itself. It is this view that led government officials in 1953 to assert full control over the schools, including those that had been successful Christian mission schools led by Anglicans and others.

Clearly, Verwoerd's assertion, as an expression of his own relation to the matrix of power and oppression as one in a dominant position, was dehumanizing and paternalistic toward Africans. Additionally, his motives were both practical and parasitic—the government and White-controlled mining and agricultural industries needed cheap and expendable Black labor to keep the South African economic machine running. Taking schooling out of the hands of other, non-Afrikaner Whites and Africans themselves was one way to keep this engine moving. As Tutu himself writes in *Made for Goodness: And Why This Makes All the Difference* (2010):

> The government recognized that [education provided by Anglicans and other Christian missionaries] was subversive to the aims of the apartheid state. One of the lynchpins of that system of racial oppression was the Bantu Education policy. The policy did not pretend to afford black South Africans an education comparable to that of their white compatriots. Its goal was to educate black people for subservience, for serfdom.[155]

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[154] Hendrik Verwoerd, qtd. in Allen, *Rabble Rouser for Peace*, 59. It is worth noting that the mission schools that Verwoerd saw as a threat to societal stability were, in fact, the schools where Tutu and Nelson Mandela and other key anti-apartheid leaders had matriculated. So, in one way, Verwoerd and his ilk were correct in assuming that control of education was necessary to ensuring the effectiveness and stability of the apartheid regime.

[155] Desmond Tutu with Mpho Tutu, *Made for Goodness: And Why This Makes All the Difference* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 121.

Verwoerd was speaking not only for himself but also for the rest of the apartheid government and many White citizens, who considered Africans to be Black sheep of limited intellect and ability needing to be guided by a White shepherd in order to play their assigned roles in the economy. White supremacists worked tirelessly within the hegemonic and structural domains to limit any real effort by Blacks to think independently and to work for their own social, economic, and political interests—all of this in order to protect White interests in the structural domain. When Tutu was still a school teacher in his 20s, his response to this ideological and practical constriction of the schooling system was to reject it. He refused his place in the structural system of domination through that educational system, leaving teaching altogether. About his difficult decision, he remarks: "I just felt I couldn't be part of this…I said to myself, sorry, I'm not going to be a collaborator in this nefarious scheme."[156] This could not have been an easy decision due to his family connections with the school system and his own economic needs.[157] Still, Tutu refused to play a subservient role in the structural domain of education under apartheid, perhaps hoping to find a route through which he could exercise power and develop a voice.

To make a living and support his wife and children, Tutu had do something, and that something was to become an Anglican priest, an option chosen initially for practical as much as deep theological reasons. Tutu studied theology at St. Peter's College, which was run by an Anglican monastic community known as the Community of the

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[156] Tutu, qtd. in Allen, *Rabble-Rouser,* 61.

[157] It is important to note that, while Tutu made a decision to leave the school system, others decided to stay and fight the apartheid government from within. For example, leaders in the African National Congress (ANC) decided to launch a protest against the Bantu Education Act of 1953 that implemented the school takeover by the Afrikaner government. The ANC started a boycott of the schools, but it was shut down when the government "threatened to black-list teachers who supported the boycott and permanently to deny education to any children not enrolled by April of the academic year" (Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy*, 109.).

Resurrection,[158] which at that time was "the only institution training black Anglican priests in the northern provinces of South Africa."[159] While at St. Peter's, Tutu was supported in his call to ministry by the monks of the Community of the Resurrection, particularly by the monk and priest Trevor Huddleston, his friend and mentor. Thus, Tutu was ordained a priest in 1960 in a powerful, White-dominated church that had been part of the colonial movement from England to South Africa. Becoming an ecclesial leader in this particular church shifted Tutu's relationship to the domains of power, giving him a new kind of authority within the apartheid-governed society and access to people and ideas in England and elsewhere. It also gave him the opportunity to develop a voice in a way that he could not have within the segregationist educational system that had been taken over by the apartheid government.

The Anglicans in South Africa had been both instruments in colonization and critics of it, and they had established schools and churches that combined Western and African ideas and practices. In the 1960s within South Africa, Anglican Church leaders had openly disagreed with apartheid policies and refused to adhere to laws that made it illegal to host inter-racial worship and other religious gatherings.[160] In general, the White leaders in the Anglican Church in South Africa were advocates for racial equality who

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[158] The Community of the Resurrection was started in nineteenth-century England by Charles Gore in the Anglo-Catholic revival known as the Oxford Movement. Although theologically and liturgically conservative, the Community of the Resurrection followed the Benedictine rule and was politically, socially, and economically aligned with Christian Socialism. The Community trained men to be Anglican priests and established a missionary outpost in Johannesburg in the early 1900s. One of the most well-known members of the Community was Trevor Huddleston, a British monk involved in early anti-apartheid work who had a tremendous influence on Tutu.

[159] Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 64.

[160] Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2009), 86.

"expressed the hope that union[161] would be established on the foundations of cooperation, trust, and justice towards all sections of the population."[162] While the Anglican Church in South Africa valued social justice, it was not a prophetic voice in working to end apartheid because there were disagreements within the church over how to advocate for change and how fast a transformation of South African society should unfold, a situation that is not unusual as groups that move toward change often divide, weakening the social justice efforts and strengthening the *status quo*.[163] There also remained, of course, some Whites within the Anglican Church who agreed with the Afrikaners' policies of separateness, or apartheid. It is within this church that Tutu served as a minister for a few years in Black communities in South Africa, providing pastoral care and liturgical leadership, until he was sent by Anglican officials to study theology at King's College in London. Through his position of growing leadership in a predominantly White-led church that was not aligned with Afrikaner interests within the matrix of power and domination, Tutu began to explore new ways of expressing his voice as a pastor.

3. *Tutu in England: Theological Studies*

Getting Tutu out of South Africa and into England to study theology was no simple feat, as he and his activist wife, Leah, had to apply for special passports that had to be cleared at the highest levels of government since Blacks were not automatically entitled to them. As Allen writes, "The possession of a passport was, in the view of the government, 'not a right but a privilege' and the applications of black South Africans to

[161] To the Anglicans, "union" meant the end of segregation and of divisions within society based on racial ideology.
[162] Battle, *Reconciliation*, 86.
[163] Battle, *Reconciliation*, 87.

travel outside the country were carefully examined," leading to questioning about Tutu's financial ability, relations to the state, and purposes for travel.[164] After months of waiting, and with the involvement of Anglican authorities on their behalf, the Tutus received passports for international travel. This experience is a perfect example of the ways in which the disciplinary domain in the matrix of domination works to organize people's lives. In carrying out the policy controlling Black Africans' travels, the bureaucracy of South Africa[165] used surveillance and subtle intimidation to assert White domination in multiple ways under the guise of orderly bureaucratic functioning, a practice which rendered these practices nearly invisible to the Black Africans whom they were meant to keep in check. Tutu was able to navigate this domain successfully only with the intervention of White ecclesial authorities with the apartheid government's authorities.

While studying abroad at Kings College, London, and assisting at a local parish from 1962 to 1966, Tutu had access to ideas and people that he had not enjoyed while in South Africa. It also gave him the significant experience of living his life outside of the apartheid system. While London certainly had its share of racism and other oppressions, as Tutu's relationship with the matrix of oppression and domination in England was as an immigrant, the quality of his experience there was very different than back at home in South Africa. He tells Allen that "There was racism in England, […] but we were not exposed to it. Maybe we were protected by the fact that we belonged in a church community."[166] Living and working as church-sponsored guests within the epicenter of the Anglican Church gave Tutu and his family a new perspective entirely. Eventually,

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[164] Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, 79.
[165] Although wrangling with the bureaucracy in England that issued the Tutus' visas was likely no picnic, it is unclear from Tutu's biographical and autobiographical accounts how easy or difficult British authorities made the process for them.
[166] Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, 87.

this experience of being protected within a White-dominated society would come into play as Tutu constructed a voice in the apartheid-ruled society to which he would return.

Tutu felt a freedom at King's College that he had never felt in South Africa, but he still faced internalized oppression as an international student from Africa studying in the West. Tutu says, "I was told I should work steadily and not panic, but […] I am feeling inadequate and am suffering from quite a huge slice of inferiority. I am too eager to do well and be impressive and so I tie myself up in knots."[167] Tutu's sense of inferiority and his desperation to impress his White professors in England are not unusual for international students coming to study in Western higher education. No matter where they come from, these students are in a new relationship to a matrix of power in a new situation within the Western academy, which has different rules and expectations and requires, for some students, a whole different language. The ways that international students like Tutu engage with the various domains of power have to be transformed by their movement into a new context, but it takes time for them to adjust. Still, the successful navigation of this new matrix of domination can give a theology student new tools for his or her own work in ministry back in the home context, wherever that may be. A good experience of international study can assist a student in developing a stronger repertoire in terms of his or her voice, and this is exactly what it did for Tutu.

4. *Tutu's Return to South Africa: Teaching and Ministering with Student Activists*

In 1966, with degrees in hand, Tutu returned with Leah and their four children to South Africa after four years away. In the following several years, he served as a theology professor and chaplain, first at the ecumenical Federal Theological Seminary in

[167] Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 84-5.

the town of Alice on the Eastern Cape and then at National University of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland, a large university situated in Lesotho. It was during this time that he developed his voice as a college professor and chaplain, made strong connections with other theologians, and learned about and supported student activist movements unfolding in South Africa and neighboring countries.

One of these student movements was the Black Consciousness movement, which had been founded by student activists including Steve Biko, a medical student at the University of Natal. The percolation of ideas through the Black Consciousness efforts of Biko and others was strongly linked to people's concerns about justice in education, which had not dissipated since the apartheid government's takeover of education in 1953. Allen makes a connection between some very important student-led education protests that would unfold in 1975-1976 and the Black Consciousness movement out of which they arose, writing:

> One of the factors which contributed to the spirit of protest among black pupils was black consciousness, which became a powerful force in black political debate and activity in South Africa. Advocates had begun to propound black consciousness in the late 1960s, strongly committing themselves to building black pride, self-reliance, and defiance in the face of state suppression.[168]

As a former secondary school teacher and university professor, Tutu was immediately familiar with the operations of the matrix of domination within the educational context, and he appreciated the liveliness of students' minds despite state-sponsored oppression. Thus, he understood the profound relevance of Biko's work to develop Black Consciousness so that it might help students critically analyze themselves and the matrices of domination during the process of being educated.

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[168] Allen, Introduction to Desmond Tutu's "Oh, God, How Long Can We Go On?" in *Rainbow People of God*, 15.

Tutu's understanding of what Biko and others were trying to do led him to learn from and support students who were becoming more politically active in challenging the unimpeded operations of the matrix of domination and oppression. In 1968, for example, Tutu joined the Black student caucus during a conference of the University Christian Movement, during which students organized a protest of discriminatory laws being enforced under the structural domain of power to inhibit Blacks from gathering and organizing in groups; Tutu's action was important not because he led the group but because he listened to the students and learned from them. Additionally, his action was unusual because many university professors and officials did not involve themselves with anti-apartheid activism since the institutions themselves opposed it as they continued to play their role in the structural domain of power.[169]

Later in 1968, there was a student protest in which the university forcibly and violently evicted student protesters from campus in a vivid example of the activity of the disciplinary domain to control and manage power relations by shutting down and shutting up students. During the university's evictions of student activists, Tutu "waded into the fray when the police arrived with dogs and tear gas" and remained in the midst of the students, praying with them and offering them blessings.[170] Despite the institution's pressures on professors and staff members not to be involved, Tutu supported his students, anyway. This particular event was significant in Tutu's development as a minister-activist and would eventually shape his prophetic voice. As Allen puts it,

> the episode was a defining moment for Tutu's ministry. It suggested not only that he had inherited his mother's compassion but, for he first time, that he was capable of transforming the burning sense of injustice he felt into creative

[169] See Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 109-110.
[170] Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 111.

> ministry to victims of violence. In this, his intervention foreshadowed his later ministry.[171]

Tutu's understanding of Black pride, self-reliance, and defiance expressed in the Black Consciousness movement; his willingness to learn from activists; and his active support of student activists would eventually come into play as he constructed his voice for political engagement in 1976. Again, because Tutu's experiences during key events such as these shaped his theological voice, his story is instructive for theological educators and our students who want to understand how involvement in social movements and learning from activists outside of the church can significantly influence the development of a public voice.

5. *Tutu Leaves & Returns to South Africa Again: London and Johannesburg*

After a few years of teaching, Tutu was recruited to be the Africa director of the Theological Education Fund (TEF), an arm of the World Council of Churches, so he and Leah and their children returned to London, which would be home base again from 1972-1975. This decision required another unpleasant engagement with the passport-granting arm of the apartheid government, a process that was as difficult the second time around as it was the first. The position with TEF allowed Tutu to travel extensively through Africa, investigating and reporting on theological education around the continent and giving him new tools for engaging with the matrix of oppression and domination in his home country. By visiting other African countries, Tutu was able to see what was working and what was not in nations that had gained independence from colonial rule. Allen describes it this way:

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[171] Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 111.

> Plunged into the national and church politics of a region numbering about 300 million people, [Tutu] learned firsthand of the challenges, successes, and failures implicit in the enormous enterprise of creating national identities, developing economies, and uniting disparate peoples arbitrarily thrown together within national boundaries imposed by European powers.[172]

Tutu's observations of the matrices of domination in these varied nations—Rwanda, Zaire (now Congo), Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone—gave him a sense of the similarities and differences of the matrix in these different contexts. It also allowed him to hear how different church leaders engaged their voices to effect change within these unique contexts, giving him a greater range of voices to choose from in his own work.

After living in and traveling to and from London for seven years during two visits, the first for academic study and the second for TEF, it was difficult for the Tutus to face returning to South Africa permanently. They had enjoyed London and did not look forward to living under apartheid rule again, but they returned because Tutu was elected Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral and came to understand it as part of his calling as a minister. Up to this point in 1975-1976, Tutu had had varied life experiences from different positions within a matrix of oppression and domination in South Africa: as a boy growing up with illnesses, as a young teacher within a repressive educational environment, as a father worried about his children's futures, as a new priest at a local parish, as an international theology student in London, as a college professor in Africa, as an administrator and researcher for TEF, and as an Anglican Church official. His engagement with that matrix shifted as he learned and grew in each of these positions, transforming him into a man with a gift for constructing a powerful voice that would be part of the larger processes of change in South Africa.

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[172] Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 123.

Through his hard work and careful development of good relationships with people across the Anglican Communion and in international ecumenical circles, Tutu had access to formal and informal education in the West and around Africa, giving him a global view of the political situation within South Africa, his home country. When he became the Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg in 1974, he was the first Black man to do so, and his career has since been marked by many firsts. At the time, Tutu was not universally loved within the Anglican Communion, for many conservative Anglicans inside and outside of South Africa were not ready for Black leadership even if they supported gradual social and political change. Additionally, some Black activists did not think he was radical and militant enough in his politics to become a leader.

Still, Tutu persisted in developing a prophetic voice for public engagement, advocating for critiques of and changes in the apartheid-structured society. His life experience as a Black man living in relation to a matrix of oppression and domination that was predicated upon racial difference and segregation gave him an awareness that enabled him to construct a multi-dimensional and nuanced prophetic voice that could be heard by all despite the constricting effects of the apartheid matrix. When his experience is understood through an intersectional lens, it reveals the life history out of which Tutu constructed a theological voice in 1976 in response to the tumultuous events of that year. The analysis turns now to two texts, both published in 1976 by Tutu, who was at that time transitioning from being the Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg in South Africa (1975-76) to becoming Bishop of Lesotho (1976-78), a tiny independent country surrounded on all sides by South Africa. What these two pieces of writing show theological educators and students is that Tutu's voice emerges from

practical concerns about his own and other people's intersectional experiences of oppression in a particular context. His prophetic voice, which is heard in two very different texts, is effective because it is responds to the complexity of people's lives; is continually unfolding as he shifts to relate to different audiences; offers compassionate statements to his readers as well as making prophetic assertions; and is geared toward healing a broken society. Theological students today may not have these same goals in constructing their voices, but Tutu provides a model of how a public theologian goes to work constructing a voice out of the intersectional fabric of his life that is both relevant to wider society and can be heard by others.

III. *An Analysis of Tutu's Theological Writings*

At the point in which Tutu wrote the two pieces from 1976 that are analyzed here, he was a highly accomplished and respected priest, theologian, and professor who had quickly risen through the ranks and, after serving as Dean of a cathedral, had been elected Bishop of Lesotho in the Anglican Church. He had started life as a Black child caught in the machinations of the four domains of power (the structural, the disciplinary, the hegemonic, and the interpersonal) as they operated to enforce a matrix of oppression and domination within a racist society. But Tutu had sought ways to learn and grow as a person despite these constraints, and he found a vocation through which he could successfully construct a voice. His time in England and traveling throughout Africa gave him a new perspective not only on South Africa's apartheid but also on himself and the possibilities for his expression of his voice. Later, through his work with student protesters while he was a university and seminary professor and his interventions in the streets during actual protests, he developed both a consciousness of his intersectional

identity as a Black man and a vocal leadership style. Tutu elected to position himself in the middle of crises brought on by the oppressive politics of the apartheid regime rather than sitting on the sidelines. As a high-ranking Anglican church leader in 1976, Tutu wrote as a person self-assured in his ability to offer his prophetic voice to the whole nation precisely because of the fact that he, personally, had experienced harsh treatment in a variety of ways at the hands of the apartheid government and, at the same time, had the experience of life as a Black man under a different system in England. By 1976, Tutu was well on his way to using his voice to name societal oppressions and to advocate for change in the structures that oppressed him and millions of others.

A. *"A Growing Nightmarish Fear": A Letter to Vorster*

1. *The Writer In Relation to His Primary Audience*

The first piece of Tutu's writing analyzed here using intersectional and rhetorical tools is his letter to South African Prime Minister John Vorster, which was initially penned on May 6, 1976. The voice of this epistle is shaped a great deal by Tutu's awareness of his primary audience. He and Vorster related to the matrix of oppression differently, for, as a Black South African man, Tutu was constrained by the domains of power within the matrix, with which he engaged in generative struggle, while Vorster, a White man, was a beneficiary of the apartheid system and the leading spokesperson for and enforcer of the stability of the matrix and the operations of the domains of power. Tutu wrote to Vorster while on a silent retreat with diocesan clergy in Johannesburg, and he originally intended for it to be private correspondence although its reach grew not long

after it was sent.[173] Thus, Tutu's primary audience for the letter was a White authoritarian Afrikaner party leader who had long served the apartheid government in various capacities. To Vorster, Tutu says, repeatedly, at key points in the letter, "I am writing to you, Sir...", which indicates rhetorical formality and conveys a high level of respect for his reader.[174] For the purpose of connecting with this particular reader, Tutu recognizes Vorster as an authority figure within the state and writes with that in mind.

However, Tutu does not allow this formality and respect to lead his reader to believe that Tutu is going to assume his place as a second-class citizen in this epistolary conversation. In the second full paragraph of the letter, Tutu's familiar introductory phrase gives way in one particular sentence to a subordinate clause that defines a common ground between the two men, making them more alike and equal rather than unalike and unequal. Tutu rejects his subordinate status in the matrix of oppression and dominance when he says,

> I am writing to you, Sir, because I know you to be a loving and caring father and husband, a doting grandfather who has experienced joys and anguish of family life, its laughter and gaiety, its sorrows and pangs. I am writing to you, Sir, as one who is passionately devoted to a happy and stable family life as the indispensible foundation of a sound and healthy society.[175]

In this passage, Tutu draws on his and Vorster's shared identities as fathers, husbands and family men—thus finding a common intersectional identity built on their gender as males and their sexuality as heterosexual men who have married women and fathered children. This assertion of common ground and equality challenges Vorster to see Tutu as a man

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[173] John Allen, *Rabble-Rouser For Peace: The Authorized Biography of Desmond Tutu* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 153-4.
[174] Tutu, "A Growing Nightmarish Fear" [1976], in *The Rainbow People of God: The Making of a Peaceful Revolution*, ed. by John Allen (New York: Doubleday, 1994). This phrase begins numerous paragraphs in the letter.
[175] Tutu, "A Growing Nightmarish Fear," 6-7.

like him rather than as a Black African Other who is different from Vorster as a White Afrikaner. At the same time, Tutu's assertion of equality also emphasizes the fact that the current segregated state of social and political relations in South Africa is not one built on equality along racial lines. While Tutu shows respect to Vorster, he does so in a way that exposes the need for this letter to be written in the first place.

Tutu builds onto this explicit comparison of two like people, himself and Vorster, by asserting that the thing that makes them the same—their dedication to stable families—is the foundation of a stable South African society.[176] Tutu is telling Vorster that there is a strong relationship between nation, family, and their roles as men.[177] He is suggesting that this complex relationship of nationhood, familial ties, and gender roles is the same, not different, for the two of them. In making this rhetorical move, Tutu frames the issue of race differently by looking at identity features that are held in common and do not depend on race and, thus, challenges the segregationist's view of race. He has shifted his and Vorster's relationship within the matrix of domination by refusing to buy into the state-defined ideological assumptions about racial difference. While Tutu knows that he has a lesser status within the matrix of oppression and domination in South Africa, he constructs a voice that confronts assumptions made by those who are able to exert

[176] It is important to note that, in asserting the stability and health of his own African family, Tutu is providing evidence that apartheid labor and housing policies that separated and destroyed African families (by sending husbands to work alone in mining towns while their wives stayed at home to look for domestic work) had not been effective in all quarters. Thus, Tutu is making a double argument: an explicit one about his likeness to Vorster in terms of family, gender, sexuality, and nationhood, and an implicit argument about the persistence of Black African families under apartheid.

[177] Patricia Hill Collins explores a similar intersectional relationship in the context of the United States in her 1998 essay, "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation," in which she contemplates the concept of "family values" using intersectional analysis. While her contextually-bound research is not necessarily applicable to this chapter on South Africa, the intellectual moves that she makes have informed this reading of Tutu's letter to Vorster. See also the chapter "U.S. Black Feminism in Transnational Context" in *Black Feminist Thought* for Collins' broader discussion of the relationship between family and nation.

power and benefit within that matrix, effectively exerting a creative and critical power of his own.

Next in this same paragraph, Tutu further asserts their shared humanity through the communication of a theological idea in connection to his self-identity as one who, like Vorster, upholds the family and nation as a man. Tutu presumes a shared theological belief when he tells his reader, Prime Minister Vorster:

> I am writing to you as one human person to another human person, gloriously created in the image of the selfsame God, redeemed by the selfsame Son of God who for all our sakes died on the Cross and rose triumphant from the dead and reigns in glory now at the right hand of the Father; sanctified by the selfsame Holy Spirit who works inwardly in all of us to change our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.[178]

Following the basic Trinitarian concept of God-in-three-persons shared by Tutu's Anglican Church as well as the Dutch Reformed Church, the state church of which Vorster was a part, Tutu makes an implicit argument that they share the same God who made every human being in God's image. Here, Tutu asserts a stance of Christian faith, saying that it is God who renders a person a person by creating him or her, not the apartheid government. No matter what the powers within the South African matrix of domination and oppression can do to dehumanize some people and uplift others inequitably, these power matrices cannot determine the fundamental personhood granted by God.

Tutu reinforces his view of his and Vorster's similarities before God by asserting that the same God who made all humans in God's image is also the God who has the ability to transform persons. God does so by changing "our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh." These are their hearts—his and Vorster's, Black Africans and White Afrikaners—

[178] Tutu, "A Growing Nightmarish Fear," 7.

not Vorster's heart alone or Whites' hearts only. Not Tutu's heart alone or Africans' hearts only. Tutu emphasizes the way in which God can change everyone in their shared situation: it is because "our" hearts of stone can be transformed—meaning that the hearts of all South African people can change, including those who are part of the power structures within the apartheid government and those who are oppressed by that government. Tutu is constructing a voice of unity rather than one of separation and alienation. This approach demonstrates his radical commitment to the transformative work of unity rather than to a simple change in the power structure within the matrix of oppression. Focused on the God he has known since childhood, Tutu is striving to create a new voice that rejects the binarism of Black and White thinking for a third option that is rooted in a shared vision of the human being as *Imago Dei*, made in the image of the relational, Trinitarian God. His rhetorical move from asserting equality in the everyday lives of men and fathers to asserting equality as a tenet of Christian faith is instructive for theological writers who wish to find ways to construct a prophetic voice from an oppressed position within a matrix of domination and oppression that operates to silence them.

2. *The Wider Audience*

Tutu's letter did not end up in Vorster's hands alone. It was read by the nation and others beyond because it was published in a newspaper not long after Tutu wrote it, a development that changed the voice and meaning of the text itself and expanded its reach beyond that of a private and personal communication. While Tutu was aware of the possibility that the letter might be published at some point, he did not initially write it for

that purpose. However, after having sent the letter to its intended recipient, Tutu shared it with his friend Lambert Pringle, a journalist who published it quickly in the *Sunday Tribune* of Durban in the province of Natal.[179] Thus, the letter became a wider spiritual-political message by giving it a large public audience in South Africa and in the international context as well. This public audience, which would have included a wide range of South Africans, would all have seen Tutu's respectful assertion of human equality with Vorster and his theological grounding for this anthropological and ethical idea. The publication of the letter clearly widened the rings of potential readers, and this gave Tutu's voice a greater reach in terms of challenging business-as-usual within the various domains of power.

What this letter shows theological educators and students is how a writer can construct a voice that connects the interpersonal domain with the structural, disciplinary, and hegemonic domains. As a piece of writing, this letter helped to establish Tutu as one who could be counted on to offer a prophetic voice arguing for changes to better those whose lives were restricted in every domain by the apartheid government. It also demonstrated his commitment to a vision of a shared world of equality, not one in which Black South Africans would simply rise in power to dominate Afrikaners and other Whites. While not all theology students from diverse educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds who are studying in North American theological education will go on to undertake roles such as the one Tutu did as an anti-apartheid leader, Tutu's way of constructing a voice for his particular audiences can help students think through their

[179] See Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, 155. It is worth noting that, despite attempts to convince Vorster to allow his response letter to be published, he refused.

own approaches to developing their voices for their own audiences where they will live and work and minister.

3. *The Writer's Subject Matter & Purpose*

For the anthology *The Rainbow People of God: The Making of a Peaceful Revolution* (1994), Allen, working as editor of Tutu's various writings, gave the Vorster missive the title "A Growing Nightmarish Fear." This name refers to one of the key lines in the letter that summarizes Tutu's immediate purpose for writing. Tutu says to Vorster and his other readers: "I have a growing nightmarish fear that unless something drastic is done very soon then bloodshed and violence are going to happen in South Africa almost inevitably. A people can take only so much and no more."[180] Tutu senses something dangerous unfolding in South Africa, and he wants Vorster to act appropriately to prevent its happening. Indirectly, he is conveying this message for the wider public audience as well, signaling to them that he knows that Black Africans have put up with dehumanization for as long as they can.

The reason why Tutu could feel the palpable edge of violence on the streets had to do with his living situation. Despite his stature in Johannesburg, Tutu had refused to live in the large home in the White neighborhood in Johannesburg where St. Mary's Deans typically lived because, as a Black African man, he would have had to appeal to the opaque government bureaucracy that operates the disciplinary domain of power to get special permission to live there—and he might not have gotten permission. Instead, he and Leah and some of their children were living in a middle-class area of Soweto, a Black township on the southwest fringe of Johannesburg. The Tutus lived side-by-side

[180] Tutu, "A Growing Nightmarish Fear," in *The Rainbow People of God*, 10.

with other Black Africans who had been forced out of their homes in Johannesburg when the apartheid government decided to thoroughly segregate South African life in the 1950s, and the Tutus knew their neighbors.

On the streets of Soweto in 1976, there was unrest about government policies that enacted the structural domain of power, particularly with regard to the curriculum in the schools, which had been shaped since the 1950s by the apartheid government's Bantu Education Ministry. The government had recently started enforcing a policy making Black primary and secondary students learn Afrikaans, the language of the White power structure. The reason for this is that Blacks' fluency in Afrikaans would help White business owners communicate more efficiently with their labor force. Fueled by insights from the Black Consciousness movement and the African National Congress' underground resistance, the African students did not wish to comply. Their defiance against this requirement began with young adolescents in the equivalent of junior high school and then spread to include older adolescents, young adults, and then, finally, adults. Living in Soweto, Tutu could not have missed the political talk around town and the angry feelings in the air about these unfolding events in the schools and on the streets.

While on his clergy retreat, Tutu realized that he was deeply worried about the situation, which had gotten very hot politically. Thus, he used the time of silence to write this personal missive to Vorster that shares not only his political-social concerns, but also his theological vision. Although Tutu's immediate concern had to do with rising tensions in South Africa around the roiling crisis over education, there were other factors, such as Black poverty, the destruction of families, and punitive labor policies, that certainly festered underneath the surface and fueled the impending calamity that would come in

the form of the Soweto uprising later in 1976. Tutu was trying to forestall what seemed inevitable by looking both toward the remediation of these problems and beyond them into a new future of reconciliation and justice, which he communicates theologically. In his writing, Tutu constructs a voice through which he links the socio-economic and political problems he senses with a theological perspective that reframes the conversation within the ideological domain. He does this not only through prose sentences, but also by offering prayers.

It is instructive that Tutu ends the letter by telling Vorster about a weekly prayer service held in St. Mary's Cathedral under his leadership. He writes:

> Since coming to this Cathedral last year, we have had a regular service, praying for justice and reconciliation in this country, every Friday. And at all services in the Cathedral we pray:
>
> God bless Africa
> Guard her children
> Guide her rulers and
> Give her peace,
> For Jesus Christ's sake.[181]

At the end of the letter, Tutu's prayer reframes the entire epistolary text, making the situation a spiritual matter that offers an opportunity to unite all persons. Using Huddleston's words, Tutu asks God for peace and blessing, divine guidance for the apartheid rulers, and the protection of all the nation's citizens, not just Blacks or Whites. Within the church, as Dean of a cathedral in a major city, Tutu uses his position within the ecclesial power structure to conduct a weekly prayer service of this nature. By conveying this to Vorster and, by extension, the wider readership of the letter, he adds a

[181] Tutu, "A Growing Nightmarish Fear," 12. This version of this prayer has been credited to Trevor Huddleston, Tutu's mentor and friend who was a monk with the Community of the Resurrection, a priest, and, eventually, bishop in the Anglican Communion. The phrase, "God Bless Africa," is credited to late nineteenth-century Methodist pastor Enoch Sontonga, a Xhosa, who used it in a hymn, and it continues to be sung as part of a pan-African liberation song, "*Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika*."

new dimension to his own prophetic voice and shapes the voice of the Anglican Church into one more actively and vocally working for the cause of social justice. The message in the prayer indirectly asks Vorster and the people (in addition to God) for inclusivity and peace, not exclusivity and fighting. For Tutu, the prayer provides an opportunity for a shift in the matrix of oppression—a new way to envision changes in the systems of domination affecting all of their lives. Sensing the potential for violence, Tutu pleads to all—Black Africans as well as White Afrikaners—for peace.

After sharing Huddleston's prayer, Tutu immediately relates to Vorster that the prayer service includes the prayer of St. Francis Assisi, which asks God to "make us instruments of Thy peace." After writing the St. Francis prayer out in full, Tutu tells Vorster that, when the Anglicans pray it, "we mean it."[182] In this way, he emphasizes Anglican worshippers' dedication to peace during this time of growing fear. Tutu also indirectly includes Vorster in the community's prayer for peace by relating it to him in the letter so that Vorster is compelled by Tutu to read the words. Vorster would have had to read the initial prayer and the St. Francis prayer to complete the letter, meaning that he, in some way, would have prayed the prayer with Tutu and his congregation. So, too, would the general public have had to pray the prayer when reading the letter in the newspaper. This inclusion of the prayer completely turns the domains of power upside down by challenging the matrix of domination in the hegemonic domain, causing readers to interact differently with the writing. Tutu seems to be suggesting that, beyond the ideology of separation embodied by the practices of apartheid lies something greater altogether, a shared world where people can come together to pray for and enact peace.

[182] Tutu, "A Growing Nightmarish Fear," 13.

Through this epistle, which is typically a very personal form of writing, Tutu constructs and uses a voice that is able to expand out into a public and political voice. This choice enables him to develop a voice that engages with all four domains of power—the structural, the disciplinary, the hegemonic, and the interpersonal—all at once. Tutu uses this multi-layered voice to challenge Vorster and the matrix of power and oppression across all four domains and to challenge assumptions that his Black and White readers might have. Through the letter, Tutu engages creatively with the matrix of domination and oppression by communicating powerfully both to Vorster, the man responsible for leading the apartheid regime, and to the wider public, including Black, White, Indian, and Colored persons who suffered as a result of the operations of power within that regime.

Reading this letter with attention to its intersectional dimensions shows theological educators and our students how Tutu asserts his concerns and those of his neighbors about structural and disciplinary oppressions (governmental policies and methods of enforcement) while using various tools from the hegemonic domain (theological concepts of personhood and societal ideologies of family and nation). Theology students and their professors can see that Tutu asserts these concerns directly to the person at the top of the hierarchy of White power—and in such a way that everyone could see and hear his challenge. He also turns expected ideas on their heads by praying for peace at the end of the document rather than pitting Black South Africans against Whites. He is able to do this by constructing a new voice that does not accept his identity as it is defined within the matrix of power and oppression as a silenced African Other. Tutu employs a method of presenting voice that violates certain practices within the

interpersonal domain that kept the races separate, and he does so in order to decenter the other domains. In this case, his complex voice is a tool, a process, and a relationship that inserts itself into the matrix of domination in a new and unexpected way, creating a new opening for conversation and—in the long run—the possibility of justice and peace. This prophetic voice from 1976 is an engaging model for theological educators and students to consider while constructing voices in and through our theological writing in 2015.

B. *"Church and Nation in the Perspective of Black Theology": The Journal Article*

1. *The Writer In Relation to His Audiences*

Tutu was a busy writer in 1976. Not only did he send his complexly-voiced letter to Vorster, but he also published an article for an academic theological journal that also displays significant creativity in constructing a prophetic voice. In his article, "Church and Nation in the Perspective of Black Theology," Tutu expresses some new ideas as well as some that are similar to those found in the letter, but he does so in a different way—with a different voice or voices. This is because the genre in which he was writing has shifted from a letter with two or three audiences to a theological essay for the intellectual public. His voice shifts also because, in the case of the essay, Tutu's primary audience would have been the readers of the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* (*JTSA*), people with whom he would have had a different relationship, perhaps one with less disparity in their various relations to the domains of power in operation in their lives and worlds. As a theologian, Tutu was well-trained, well-read, and already engaged in conversations with respected thinkers at home and abroad. This journal article shows theology students how differently a writer can construct and convey a voice due to shifts

in his or her rhetorical position and in the writer's intersectional relationships with readers and the context in which he or she writes.

A publication of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's[183] School of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics, the *JTSA* became an important academic theological journal in Africa that promoted not only established scholars but also new African theological voices.[184] As its webpage states, *JTSA* was and is intended "as a vehicle to promote theological reflection within the social, political and cultural context of southern Africa."[185] Along with South African theologian and missologist David Bosch and international ecumenist Hans-Ruedi Weber, Tutu was a contributor to the first issue of the *JTSA* in 1972, when he served as a theology professor at the National University of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland.

In his 1976 article for the *JTSA*, "Church and Nation," Tutu writes with a voice that clearly conveys a sense of authority. This comes, at least in part, from being an educated theologian, experienced theology professor, well-traveled citizen, and powerful church leader engaged in international theological discourse. In this essay, Tutu theorizes what he demonstrates in his letter to Vorster: that theology must be responsive to human lives. In the first paragraph of the essay, he states that "theology arises when the believer reflects on his experience in the light of his faith" and that "theology will change with the changing conditions and circumstances of those on whose behalf the theologising was

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[183] KwaZulu-Natal is a province in the southeastern part of South Africa along the Indian Ocean; its largest city is Durban, and its capital is Pietermaritzburg. In 1976 when Tutu's essay was published, it would have been two provinces—the Natal province of South Africa and the state-established Zulu homeland, or Bantustan, of KwaZulu. The two provinces were joined in 1994 at the end of apartheid rule, one of the results of the cessation of the segregationist practices that had created the separate territories for Africans.
[184] See a description and brief history of the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* on the University of KwaZulu-Natal's website at http://srpc.ukzn.ac.za/journal-of-theology-for-southern-africa.aspx.
[185] See the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* on the University of KwaZulu-Natal's website at http://srpc.ukzn.ac.za/journal-of-theology-for-southern-africa.aspx.

undertaken in the first place."[186] In these comments, Tutu is informed by three significant lines of thought in theology: 1) Anglican theology, which tends to ground itself in the life of faith as it unfolds in everyday relational circumstances; 2) Black theology, which was initially articulated by North American theologian James Cone and others who prioritized the liberation of Black persons in all theological activity;[187] and 3) African theology, which is grounded in an African communal philosophy, epistemology, and anthropology.[188] Thus, Tutu describes a contextual theological model that is consonant with the demands of its situation. If his letter to Vorster enacts contextual theology expressing a prophetic voice, this journal article voices a theological rationale operating underneath and behind the letter itself. Paired with the letter, the article illustrates how a single writer can construct more than one voice for different audiences out of his or her intersectional experience in pursuit of a particular theological goal.

2. *The Subject Matter & Purpose*

Tutu wrote this article in 1976 in response to a request for theological reflection on the relationship of church and state. More specifically, the question at hand was, "Should the Church be involved in politics?"[189] While Tutu's answer to the question was not published as an essay until June, it is likely that, given the general sluggishness of the academic publishing process, he wrote it in the months prior to the letter he sent to Vorster in May. From one angle, the essay does not seem to be linked to the immediate

[186] Tutu, "Church and Nation," in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 15 (1976), 5.
[187] For more on Tutu's intellectual similarities and differences with James Cone, see Michael Battle's *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*, especially Chapter Two.
[188] See Michael Battle's "A Theology of Community: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu" (2000) and his *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (1997/2009). While the first two of these theological streams of thought will be explored here, the third one—African theology—is covered in Chapter Four of this dissertation.
[189] Tutu, "Church and Nation," in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 15 (1976), 7.

situation in South Africa. However, seen from another angle, it is clear that Tutu had this in mind as he wrote for his immediate audience, which was a group of academic theologians, who were mostly, but not exclusively, working in the southern African region.

If Tutu's answer to the question of the church's activity in matters of politics were not demonstrated clearly enough in his action of writing of a letter to the Prime Minister of South Africa, he makes it clear in this academic piece. Here, he answers the initial question with a resounding YES by offering a theological perspective grounded in the life of Jesus as depicted in the Gospel—a Jesus whom he interprets as a person engaged in feeding hungry people, healing the sick, and ministering to the whole person. As Tutu says, Jesus had an "inability to see religion as divorced from the totality of life as it is lived. Religion for him was not just an aspect of life. It was the whole of life, or nothing. Anything else would be a travesty of the good news he had come to declare to God's children."[190] While this does not directly address the situation on the ground as Black Africans grappled with the oppressions in their lives due to the matrix of power and domination, it does convey Tutu's politically-minded views and his practice of political engagement as a religious leader. For him, Jesus was engaged socially, politically, and spiritually in every aspect of human life. This is the model Tutu chooses to uphold in his own practice of ministry. He is pointing to his answer: the church must be involved in politics.

Due to his understanding of who Jesus was and is, Tutu shows a commitment to social justice and is able to articulate his sense that religion is part of a whole way of life, including church and politics. Furthermore, Tutu's view of the function of theology is

[190] Tutu, "Church and Nation," in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 15 (1976), 9.

informed by his interpretation of Jesus as one who was fully enmeshed in life and who was not willing to separate religion from other aspects of human experience. By seeing Jesus' contextual ministry as a model, he defines the doing of theology in the church in 1976 as a contextual activity concerned with everyday life. Tutu writes that theology must

> demonstrate the so-called scandal of particularity which places it in splendid company since the Lord and Master, who is always the subject of all theological discourse in an ultimate sense, shared this scandal when in the Incarnation he became a particular man with a particular ethnic and human history.[191]

For Tutu, human beings are implicated in the scandal of particularity in which God chose to become human in a particular form, so we must focus on the concrete circumstances that require theological reflection and discussion. This is because God became incarnate in a human being and chose to relate so intimately with us in our everyday humanness.

Tutu's emphasis on the Incarnation is a very Anglican perspective in that it connects a positive theological anthropology with practices of everyday hospitality and pastoral care, a rich sacramental life that joins the sacred and the quotidian, and ongoing commitments to social justice and reconciliation. Anglican church historian and North American theologian Fredrica Harris Thompsett explains Anglicans' incarnational theology in this way:

> In Anglican theology the legacy of the Incarnation is a cherished focal point. The Incarnation has become a guiding principle shaping Anglican understandings of humanity, the sacraments, and the material world because it underscores the potential goodness of humanity. […] For South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, incarnational theology means that the living Word of God is addressed to all people: through the Incarnation all men and women are moved closer to conformity with God's purpose and nature. In stressing God's initiative in moving toward us, the Incarnation provides a foundation for Anglican optimism about humankind.[192]

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[191] Tutu, "Church and Nation," in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 15 (1976), 5.
[192] Thompsett, *Living With History* (Cambridge/Boston: Crowley Publications, 1999), 30-31.

Tutu's sense of God being with us is what gives him hope for justice in the face of great odds. Not only does Tutu's incarnational theology offer a positive view of humanity, but it also provides an impetus for social justice work such as that exemplified in the anti-apartheid movement.

What makes incarnational theology stand out in Tutu's thinking is its focus on relationality. Along these lines, feminist Anglican theologian Denise Ackermann, a White South African committed to anti-apartheid work, describes Anglican thinking about the Incarnation and its relationship to social justice in this way:

> This means that the fact that God took on a human face in the person of Jesus has implications for how we understand our relationship with God and with one another. God is not just Other, God is among us and the divine is in all aspects of creation. God wants every creature to be redeemed, and there is no split between the sacred and the secular. Nothing, no person, no issue, no condition, no circumstance does not have a claim on the redemptive work of the Gospel. This means that social justice is an indispensible component of religious practice.[193]

The Incarnation links our social justice work to our religious life, as God is in active, redemptive relationship with all human beings at all times, across all aspects of the matrix of domination. Thus, Tutu's theological vantage point on the question at hand—that of the role of the church in the politics of the state—is one that is grounded in the understanding of God amongst us and with us and in our lives, a God that loves us so much that that God would live with us, feed and heal us, and walk with us every day as we seek liberation for the whole of humanity. Tutu's practice as a theologian, minister, and activist is theologically Anglican because, for him, the Incarnation informs him that

[193] Ackermann, *After the Locusts: Letters from a Landscape of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 142-43.

it is a spiritual practice to be involved in the anti-apartheid movement through offering a prophetic voice.

This coherence with a foundational Anglican theological idea demonstrates the degree to which Tutu's education in Anglican theological institutions and his practice as an Anglican lay person, priest, and then bishop, shaped him and the construction of his prophetic voice. It also says something about the way in which he engaged with the matrix of oppression both within and through the church. Using ideas derived from the hegemonic domain within church life, Tutu crafts a voice and an argument that implicitly challenges the domains controlled by the apartheid state and apartheid supporter within the church itself. Tutu's purpose, then, is to use the theological resources at hand to develop support for the church's critical engagement with the state, which embodies the matrix of oppression and domination, in order to effect political change in consonance with God's reconciling and just actions. Again, Tutu shows nascent theological writers a way forward in articulating a voice that is responsive to its context and able to develop the available theological resources in creating such a response. While not all theology students in North America will be interested in following all of the contours of his theological subject matter, they will be edified by seeing how he achieves his purposes for this theological journal article for a scholarly audience in contrast to the letter to Vorster.

3. *The Wider Audience*

Because the *JTSA* was established for the purpose of promoting theological reflection of an intellectual nature and because its contributors included scholars on the

cutting edge of theology in 1976,[194] the primary audience for Tutu's essay would have been rather small and composed of other scholars, curious journalists, and possibly educated but non-scholarly lay readers of the time, who were most likely all Christian and who had interest in the topics, some training in theology, and concerns about church-related matters. But the *JTSA* had as part of its mission the publication of articles that would have been "directly related to the witness of the church in both Africa and the world,"[195] which means that the journal understood itself to be global as well as regional. Therefore, while the primary audience for these types of essays might have been small and focused on Africans first, it would have extended to include international scholars and would have been ecumenical in nature. Indeed, the journal eventually expanded its reach well beyond Southern Africa with a host of other contributors over time.[196]

Tutu was himself in conversation with theologians around the world, and he was aware that the journal was receiving a wider readership, so he expected that his work might well be read beyond its immediate audience. Thus, a secondary audience for Tutu's article would have included an international readership as well as persons of Tutu's time who were researching his publications—perhaps, even, officials in the apartheid government who were keeping tabs on him[197] or journalists researching his intellectual

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[194] Besides Tutu, some of the other writers for the fifteenth edition, in which his "Church and Nation" article appeared, included University of Cape Town philosopher Augustine Shutte, who wrote "Religious Laws: The Christian Problem"; University of Cape Town sociologist Ken Juber, who penned "The Roman Catholic Church and Apartheid"; and Rhodes University professor and German Reformed theologian Felicity Edwards, who wrote "After Hartford: Further Response to the Hartford Appeal for Theological Affirmation," the 1975 ecumenical and anti-modernist declaration.

[195] See the *JTSA*'s website at http://srpc.ukzn.ac.za/journal-of-theology-for-southern-africa.aspx

[196] These contributors have included German Reformed theologian Jurgen Moltmann, Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Kung, North American feminist Catholic theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, Anglo-American philosophical theologian and pluralist John Hick, South African theologian and human rights attorney Barney Pityana, and North American biblical scholar Norman Gottwald, to name just a few.

[197] Although it was known that the apartheid government kept files on many people, especially leaders like Tutu, most files on him were destroyed when the National Party's hegemony ended. It is not known what was in Tutu's personal file.

background. The way in which these various audience would have changed Tutu's voice cannot be explored here, but it is important to note that, in addition to expecting to communicate with other African theologians through the journal article, he would have anticipated Anglican theologians from around the world and Black theologians from the United States to be interested in what he was writing. These expectations could have had an effect upon Tutu's voice as a writer.

Speaking to his primary audience of southern African theologians, Tutu authoritatively describes what Black theologians are to be doing. The outcome of his reflection on the role of the church in the politics of the state has everything to do with Jesus and everything to do with the role of the Black theologian in society. Here, Tutu identifies a parallel between Jesus' embrace of the whole life of people and the need for Black theologians to do the same. Tutu writes:

> The black theologian can know nothing of a merely etherealised religion concerned only for the salvation of man's so-called soul. The Gospel is for the whole man. It is, we believe, our encounter with the Son of God, this Jesus Christ, in prayer, worship and the sacraments, in meditations on the Bible, which impels us to declare the will of God in a situation of injustice and oppression, to tell black people that God loves them and that they are of value: that no matter what others may say or do—they are persons of infinite value.[198]

In this passage, Tutu is clearly speaking to theologians like himself—thus, the use of the pronouns "we" and "us." He is urging his audience to understand that the concerns of Christianity are not for something that happens to the disembodied soul in a heavenly beyond; rather, Christianity concerns the whole person in the embodied here-and-now of everyday life. Tutu is arguing for his fellow Black theologians to see the Gospel—understood through prayer, sacramental worship, Bible study, and a personal encounter

[198] Tutu, "Church and Nation in the Perspective of Black Theology," in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 15 (1976), 10.

with Jesus—as indicating that Black persons are loved and valued and that God's will is not for the continuation of injustice. With these words, Tutu is speaking directly to other Black theologians in South Africa, encouraging them to take up the cause of uplifting oppressed people by following the example of Jesus Christ, who is in relationship with them and, indeed, all of humanity.

Beyond his primary audience were those readers and conversation partners outside of South Africa with whom Tutu had already established a reputation and practice. He was a theologian engaged in dialogue with White Western theologians and with Black theologians from the United States like James Cone at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.[199] It is through his contacts in the United States that Tutu explored more fully the theological dimensions of Black Consciousness and began to embrace Black theology and to develop both of these in relation to African and Anglican theology. Tutu's relationships to North American Black theology, the Black Consciousness movement, and himself as a writer with a wide international as well as a regional audience merge together in this essay in an interesting way. He says that

> This evangelistic campaign of black theology must succeed to exorcise from the souls of black Christians the self-contempt and self-hatred which are the blasphemous effects of injustice and racism. It must succeed in helping them to assert their personhood and humanity because only <u>persons</u> can ultimately be reconciled.[200]

The wiping away of Black self-hatred and the positive embrace of Black personhood that it enabled were two of the key points of the Black Consciousness movement around the

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[199] For more on Tutu's engagement with international theological voices, read Wilmore and Cone's Introduction to Part VI, "Black Theology and Third World Theologies" in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 445-462. Also, John Allen discusses Tutu's intellectual development, including his sparring with East African theologian John Mbiti in *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, especially pages 135-139.

[200] Tutu, "Church and Nation," 10. Underlining, Tutu's.

world. As mentioned earlier, this was a model of self-education and social justice work pioneered in South Africa by Steve Biko, a man whom Tutu admired and at whose funeral he spoke after Biko's death at the hands of prison interrogators in 1977.[201] But for Tutu, this was not simply a matter of feeling better about one's self; it had to do with preparing each person to fight injustice and racism so that justice and peace might be achieved. He charges Black theologians with using this process of coming to self-consciousness, self-acceptance, and personhood in order lead others toward reconciliation with humanity and with the God who made us all.

Reconciliation, in Tutu's mind, was always more than a political-social concept; he understood it to be a deeply theological concept involving connection with God through and with other human beings. As Tutu puts it in the end of his "Church and Nation" essay:

> The vertical Godward dimensions of religion cannot be separated from the horizontal manward ones. How can you say you love God whom you have not seen if you hate the brother whom you have seen? The love of God in the summary of the Law is inextricably bound up with the love of neigbour. They form two sides of the same coin and you can dispense with neither.[202]

Reconciliation is both the embodiment of Jesus' command and his own practice—that we love our neighbors and God as well. Reconciliation is what the Incarnation shows us how to do.

In his message to theologians far and wide, Tutu advocates the reconciliation of persons across the boundaries of race, class and other divisions, which have been constructed by human beings and perpetuated by the matrix of domination. For him, this

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[201] As Tutu remarked in his funeral message, Biko was "the found[ing] father of the black consciousness movement," through whom God "sought to awaken in the black person a sense of his intrinsic value and worth as a child of God" (Tutu, "Oh, God, How Long Can We Go On," in *Rainbow People of God*, 19).
[202] Tutu, "Church and Nation," 11.

means that Black theologians must see White persons as equally loved by God despite Whites' practices of injustice and oppression and their obsession with wealth at the expense of others. If some of his ideas about Black persons being made in the image of God were not popular with many Whites, these ideas that Whites should be seen as persons were not necessarily popular with all Blacks. Still, Tutu persists in his view that all are God's children, asserting the following about the work of Black theologians for the cause of social justice:

> We would hope that in the process we could also help white people recover their humanity and personhood which have been grievously injured by their participation in an unjust and oppressive society, because they too need to be assured that they matter, that they are of value because God loves them and they do not need to look for spurious assurances of their worth either through bullying or amassing material things.[203]

In this text, Tutu demonstrates his ability to see how the oppressors are dehumanized even as they dehumanize others, a vision that would carry him through his ministry in an increasingly violent time in South Africa and into a new time with the end of apartheid. What Tutu voices is a prophetic truth about the relationship that all human beings—Black and White—have with God. This is a truth that would have made many readers of that time—Black and White—uncomfortable. In a world that wanted (and, in fact, still wants) to categorize people in terms of binaries, Tutu is reaching for the common ground, which, for him is a political, economic, social, and spiritual reality rooted in the fact that all of us are made and loved by God. It is this basic idea, shared in 1976 with his fellow theologians, that would inform Tutu's lengthy ministry and would shape the ways in which he guided the Truth and Reconciliation Commission so many years later during a time of a transitional government led by Nelson Mandela. It is his belief in sharing a

[203] Tutu, "Church and Nation," 11.

common ground with all humanity through relationship to each other and to a God who is with us that he was able to construct an effective and prophetic voice during a time of great turbulence in South Africa.

Tutu is not the only theological writer whose works could be analyzed in theological education in order to assist students with their own writing; indeed there are many other very interesting theological writers whose voices evoke different kinds of insights when read through a rhetorical and intersectional lens.[204] However, his voice is the example chosen for this dissertation because of his experience as an international student who studied theology in a Western university, his interest in addressing oppression from a theological vantage point, and his use of academic English and other tools available within the matrix of domination and oppression to construct a viable voice for the three publics of church, society, and the academy. By developing an awareness of how Tutu constructed his voice in writing, students can be guided to consider how they might construct their own within the matrices of oppression and domination that constrain their lives and work.

IV. *Speaking to the Three Publics: Bringing New Voices to the Table through Writing*

In the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, North American womanist theologian Jacquelyn Grant asserted a very real need to bring unheard voices to the table to ensure that they are heard, and this is what Tutu did. He created a complex prophetic voice from a dual position as a person whose relationship to the matrix of oppression and domination silenced him in some respects due to his racial identity while offering him

[204] Two of these are Augustine (354-430) and Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), whose voices are complex and deeply responsive to their contexts and their audiences.

some opportunities to develop and express his voice due to his role as a powerful leader within a powerful church. We can read Tutu's texts, written almost forty years ago, and see the traces of his construction of voices that spoke eloquently to the three publics to address the pressing social justice issues during that time. In light of the main concern of this dissertation—student voices in theological education—what are some of the qualities of Tutu's voice that make him a good model for us to consider as theological educators who wish to assist students to prophetically speak truth to power in the public sphere?

First, Desmond Tutu is not a systematic theological thinker, and even his academic theological voice does not present itself as one. Rather, he is a practical theologian whose work responds to the situation in which he finds himself, giving it an immediacy and particular sense of context. His is a voice that uses the materials at hand—ideas, phrases, contextual cues, relationality—to express ideas relevant to a given situation. The fact that he was an active minister and preacher thinking quickly and creatively within a tense social, ecclesial, and political environment left him little time to sit and ponder ideas at leisure; instead, he chose to use his leisure time to pray in silence and in worship with his community of faith. This means that Tutu never had the opportunity to construct a coherent theological system and, instead, had to do theology on the fly, in the middle of things, as events unfolded. This occasional nature of his theological writing and the varied way in which he voices ideas do not indicate a lack of deep thought but show a remarkable consistency over time and in different situations. He is exemplary of how good theology can emerge from the active life of a minister and activist. For student writers, this means that being a it is possible to do good that takes into account the three publics while undertaking various vocational callings. With some

intellectual preparation and writing practice, a person working closely and responsively with her or his community can offer a powerful, effective, and lasting theological voice.

Second, Tutu shows us that there is something about good theological writing that is activist-oriented because it is rooted in its context and cares about the outcome. Because Tutu wrote from within a cauldron of social tension and change—and because it mattered to him what happened in South Africa—there is a practicality and liveliness to his writer's voice. His is a voice that is part of a lived reality within the entire matrix of oppression, but it is one that is willing to challenge the domains of oppression rather than sit quietly on the sidelines; this engagement enables it to be a prophetic voice in the public sphere. By being so grounded, Tutu offers a model of constructing voice in which the writer deeply understands his or her complex position and power in interpersonal relations to others and to the matrix of oppression as a whole. The writer then makes informed rhetorical choices *vis-à-vis* that position that enable him or her to live into commitments to justice and mercy. This is a model that includes self-awareness, awareness of the matrix of oppression and domination, and awareness of the available rhetorical tools, all of which are helpful to theology and ministry students just learning to construct their own voices for a lifetime of ministry.

Third, from Tutu's example, theological educators and students can learn that the writer's voice is not static or singular. Instead, it changes as it is constructed for different circumstances and audiences and with different purposes in mind. Throughout Tutu's ministry, he has continued to construct and reconstruct his theological voice, refining his ideas and expressions even as he has undertaken new roles in relation to changing conditions in church and society. For example, in the 1990s during the transition from the

apartheid government, Tutu became what some have called the "public confessor"[205] for South Africa through his role in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Since then, as we have moved into the twenty-first century, Tutu has continued to be a global voice inviting marginalized voices to the table in his work on behalf of women, LGBTQ persons, environmental causes, persons with HIV/AIDS, and many, many others in dire situations. Well into his 80s now, Tutu continues to refine and shape his voice to help others in marginalized and oppressed groups around the world find a place at the table. His is a voice that will continue to grow and change as long as he is alive, and it is an excellent living example for theology students to consider.

Fourth, Tutu's is a voice that is at once prophetic and compassionate, showing that prophetic speech can have a pastoral component to it when it takes into account the three publics. His friend and mentor from the Community of the Resurrection, Trevor Huddleston, while Bishop of Mauritius, described Tutu's voice as one that became a voice of hope because he offered this voice as one of "Christian prophecy, compassion, and, surprisingly, Christian humour."[206] With humor and humility, Tutu was able to work at the intersection of the various aspects of his own identity, to creatively engage the matrix of oppression across all four domains of power, and to speak and write for these prophetic purposes. This ability to convey both prophecy and compassion is one sorely missing from much public discourse today and is critical for students of theology and ministry to learn as they seek to become the new leaders in church, society, and the academy. Without compassion, prophetic speech and writing has the tendency to aim for

[205] Battle, "A Theology of Community," 173.
[206] Trevor Huddleston, Foreword, in *Crying in the Wilderness: The Struggle for Justice in South Africa* by Desmond Tutu, ed. by John Webster (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 7.

destruction of systems without caring about how we will rebuild them in the aftermath; Tutu provides an alternative to that pattern.

Fifth and finally, Tutu's voice is the voice of reconciliation rather than division. Reconciliation is the opposite of apartheid, or separateness, which was the stated policy and practice of the South African government. According to Katharine Jefferts Schori, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, reconciliation "is the foundational understanding of Christian mission, particularly in the Anglican and Episcopal strand of Christianity: bringing together that which is separated, alienated, ruptured, sick, or broken."[207] Tutu has long employed his voice in the service of bringing people together; it is, in fact, his greatest act of rebellion against the divisive apartheid regime of his childhood and most of his adulthood. In *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (1997/2009), Michael Battle says that Tutu's is an example of "conciliatory theology,"[208] which makes his work sound weak and too compromising, characteristics that many have accused Tutu of displaying. But Tutu's genius was to find a conciliatory voice that was also prophetic. His voice of conciliation enabled him to do the greatest battle of all in relation to a matrix of oppression that thrived in the gaps and disparities caused by human division and exploitation. This is a remarkable accomplishment for theology students to consider as they write: sometimes, the voice you choose does not at first appear to be coming from a place of strength, but, upon deeper

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[207] Katharine Jefferts Schori, Afterword, in *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* [1997] by Michael Battle, revised and updated (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2009), 180.

[208] Battle uses this phrase repeatedly in *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* to describe Tutu's theology as concerned with reconciliation of human beings across all divides. Battle contrasts this with other theological positions, including James Cone's Black theology, which Battle calls "survivalist theology" (Battle, *Reconciliation*, 165).

examination, its boldness shines through. The voice of reconciliation can be boldly prophetic in a broken world.

Building upon these insights about Tutu's voice, the next chapter will deepen this investigation of theological writing and the writer's voice by examining the ways in which writing is relational and communicative, driving toward connection with others in the church, the academy, and society, and with God in this social activity. What makes an author's voice(s) viable has do with the author's relationship between him/herself and his/her audience and context, as we shall see in the writing of Tutu and his fellow South African Anglican theologian, colleague, and friend, Denise Ackermann, both of whom write about Ubuntu theology, a pan-African theology of relationship. A growing awareness of and facility with the relationality of voice is what gives theological writing its elasticity and its ability to transform graduate students as they make their way through their theological educations. The rich relational theological insights of Ubuntu can assist theological educators as we consider how we might help our students transform themselves and their voices through theological writing so that they and we might bring new voices—their own and others'— to the table.

Chapter Four

Constructing a Voice: Writing as a Relational & Ethically Transformational Act

> I keep wondering if I could ever achieve this [ability to write theologically] in a second language and pass on my experience as I do in Spanish?
>
> ~ Ana Ibarra [209]

I. *Shifting Our View: Educating Good Writers, Not Judging Good Writing*

What is it like for students from outside of the mainstream in North American theological institutions to write in our schools? Readers may recall the answer of Ana Ibarra, a second language graduate student from Mexico who is nearing the end of her master's program at Boston College and whose voice ended Chapter One. In her reflection on writing in theological education, Ibarra answers this question by asking the following question: "Making someone feel identified and connected to my experience gave me hope for progress in this challenge [to write well in theology]. I keep wondering if I could ever achieve this in a second language and pass on my experience as I do in Spanish?"[210] Rather than questioning the content she is learning in theology classes, Ibarra questions how to reach another person through her writing in English. Writing theology in English in a new culture and educational system has caused her to think about connecting with others. Ibarra wants to express her experience theologically in order to identify with and relate to her audience, but she is unsure whether it is possible when she writes in a language other than her mother tongue. This is what it is like for her to write in theological education.

The fundamental predicament of all theological writers, including student writers, is rooted in our concerns about audience. We theological writers ask ourselves and each

[209] Ana Ibarra, personal email dated January 26, 2015. Used with permission.
[210] Ibarra, personal email.

other: How do we write in this new language so that we can be heard by others? Students' mastery of content is important; their good uses of grammar and syntax are necessary; and their understanding genres of theological writing is crucial—yet all of this must be carried out in the service of the main reason human beings write: to communicate with other human beings. Students are always aiming for establishing a relationship with others (professors, parishioners, a bishop, friends), no matter what they are writing about. The other persons reading a text (the audience) are operating in student writers' minds as they write, and our writing pedagogy must bring this sense of connection to the fore. Our current practice of writing in theological education downplays this aspect of writing in favor of demonstrations of content. This limits the potential of writing to transform students as whole persons, a process useful not only in school, but in ministerial work beyond the academy.

Ibarra's reflection further reveals that, indeed, she is more concerned with becoming a good writer who can communicate with her readers than in modeling good writing for the sake of itself. As she says in her reflection, "Writing in English limited my way of expressing myself because I'm more concerned with writing correctly so that North American people can understand."[211] She feels limited as a writer because she worries about readers in theological institutions in the United States understanding her, not because she does not understand the content of the theological subject matter, the genres for theological education, or the need to write in clean and clear academic prose in English. Writing "correctly" means writing in such a way that she relates to others. What Ibarra wants in her writing is the ability to express her experience in a second language so as to relate to readers from a different cultural, linguistic, and educational background

[211] Ibarra, personal email.

than her own. With a readjustment in our pedagogy of writing, theological educators could help her attend to the development of that sense of connection as she strives to create a theological voice for herself in English.

What this dissertation argues is that, for students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds like Ibarra, theological educators' narrow concern with academic utility in writing, which manifests in content-focused assignments but pays little attention to process,[212] should not be the sole focus if we want our students to write well not only for us, but also for the church and wider society. While learning the analytic and critical skills required in academic thinking and writing is crucial for students, they are not the only goal of our students, who are interested in learning how to share the life of faith with others. Students in theological education have more than an academic audience in mind as they write, and we can and should help them access and examine this underlying reality in their writing processes. This will require a major shift in theological educators' understanding of how and why we include writing in our classrooms and across the whole curriculum.

Dawnn Brumfield, a Black pastor from Chicago who graduated from Vanderbilt Divinity School, made her focus clear in her reflection, included in Chapter One. Brumfield states, "learning to write theologically for the academy was an extreme challenge for me" but "now, […] I am more confident that my writing fits the work that I do. I am a preacher. I am a homiletician, that is. I preach. The people experience God in that way, too."[213] Presenting good academic writing to a professor was never her primary

[212] In some courses, such as preaching, professors do urge students to pay attention to the writing process. However, depending upon the school and the professor, some preaching courses are more concerned with the final performance, or result, of the preparation process.
[213] Dawnn M. Brumfield, personal email dated January 22, 2015. Used with permission.

goal; gaining skills for preaching to and communicating with the people of God was and remains her aim. For Brumfield, academic utility was a hurdle over which she had to jump in order to finish a needed degree, but she was much less interested in refining her skills for communications with an academic audience than with an audience sitting in the pews on Sunday. She wanted to construct a voice in relation to parishioners, not academics; Brumfield wished to construct a pastoral voice, not an academic one.

In our writing assignments, theological educators could actively use this focus on the church as audience, shared by many students like Brumfield, as a way to help the students fine-tune their writing processes for the audiences whom they wish to reach rather than require our students to conform solely to the various academic language and genres in each disciplinary field for the benefit of a one-semester course. Similarly, we could invite students to focus their theological writing on other audiences, depending on their own vocational goals: the wider public can be reached through practice op ed pieces for local newspapers; a specialized but broad readership might be reached in a popular Christian magazine like *Commonweal* or *Christian Century*; younger audiences might be reached through blogs, podcasts, or even Twitter postings. Brumfield, Ibarra, and similar students would then have a number of rich and guided experiences in thinking through how to convey complicated theological ideas or biblical texts to the audiences that matter most to them. Again, this approach to teaching theological writing assists students in an effort to build relationships with other people in a variety of settings, especially those outside of the academy, rather than to demonstrate mastery of content or some other writing skills for an academic audience alone.

The pedagogical approach advocated here pushes for a change in theological educators' understanding and practice of teaching writing. We must shift our focus in writing from the product of students' efforts to the students themselves, who are engaged in a process of constructing voices as persons who are learning and have something to teach us. The goal is for theological educators to expand our understanding and uses of writing in seminaries, schools of theology and ministry, and divinity schools to include a focus on students' communicative and relational abilities in and through writing. This is not an abdication of pedagogical goals such as the development of critical thinking skills, which are desperately needed in our current socio-political climate. Instead, this approach to writing envisions the development of critical thinking stills as part of the benefit of teaching writing as a relational process. As students grapple with the complexity of their contexts and become more aware of the dimensions of audience at play in their writing, they will develop analytical abilities and critical decision-making skills as they make informed choices about how to write.

How do we, as theological educators, turn our attention toward our students' writing process as a relational effort? How do we help students create a voice or voices that are connected to and enlivened by conversation with others? In the previous chapters, the dissertation has offered ideas for assisting in the shift from writing as academic utility alone to writing as an intentional process of communicating and relating to others. Chapter Two examined perspectives of rhetorical and composition theorists and linguists, which can offer us approaches to making a pedagogical shift toward a focus on the construction of a writer's voice or voices in relation to an audience or audiences within a particular context. Using the Rhetorical Triangle, theological educators can assist

students in thinking through the various relationships they are trying to establish through their writing. Employing Bakhtin's model of the Push-and-Pull in writing can help students analyze their experience as they struggle to write theologically for whichever audience is their focus. Ultimately, these resources are helpful to students and to their teachers as the students begin the process of constructing their own voices in an effort to communicate with others.[214]

In Chapter Three, intersectional analysis sheds light on how one minister, writer, theologian, and social justice activist, Desmond Tutu, constructed a prophetic voice for the effort to end apartheid in South Africa. Understanding the various dimensions of the domains of power within the matrix of oppression and domination help us to learn how a theological writer can construct an intentional voice; by considering these domains, all theological writers—teachers and students alike—have tools to think critically about our contexts and the ways in which voices are constructed even within very difficult socio-political settings. The analysis of Tutu's construction of his prophetic voice provides a model for how teachers might guide students in reading and understanding the power dynamics inherent in creating theological voices *en route* to the creation of their own. No student will replicate Tutu's intersectional experience, but she certainly can examine the ways that her participation in the domains of power within the matrix of oppression and domination can constrict or provide openings for the construction of a voice that relates to the audience whom she imagines. Knowing the limitations as well as the opportunities in creating a voice can assist students in transforming themselves for the work they

[214] Chapter Five includes examples of the ways that these theorized insights can be employed in classroom settings.

believe they are called to do in ministry, activism, education, pastoral care, and other endeavors.[215]

There is more to consider regarding the construction of voice in theological writing: the theological underpinnings of such a move. This chapter, Chapter Four, explores a theological perspective that supports and can provide additional resources to help theological educators reform our approach to writing. Having a theological touchstone can inform educators' approaches to teaching writing in our own classes and can assist us in re-imagining the ways in which writing is incorporated in the overall curriculum in divinity schools, schools of theology and ministry, and seminaries. Examined from this perspective, theological writing itself offers clues to how we might teach writing in such a way that students can intentionally develop their voices in relation to various audiences.

The specific theology examined here is known as Ubuntu, a pan-African relational theology articulated by Tutu and others. Rooted in ancient African culture and philosophy, Ubuntu as a Christian theology sheds light on how our interdependence, rather than our independence, is the norm for human beings. Ubuntu encourages us to understand ourselves as having been made in the image of God for relationship and community, helps us see knowledge and knowing as complex community processes, and upholds an ethic of mutual relationship and sharing rather than isolation and self-sufficiency. Additionally, Ubuntu shows theological educators how our pedagogical ethics in theological education must be tempered with an understanding of our human connectedness instead of relying on the North American default position of individual

[215] Chapter Five provides some examples of how this intersectional insight can be used in assignments and classroom discussions.

achievement. Ubuntu theologians prize connections across difference and diversity and see them as gifts for the enrichment of the whole of humanity rather than as problems to be overcome. As a non-Western theology, Ubuntu presents North Americans with another view of how we were made by God to live in ongoing relationship. Ubuntu reminds us that we are invited to relate to others, the world, and God through generosity and hospitality instead of isolation and self-aggrandizement.

For students and theological educators from some cultures outside of the United States, from minority cultures within the United States, and from certain theological vantage points, Ubuntu theology may name an already-familiar way of looking at the world. For example, Ubuntu ideas will ring true to professors and students from African nations and to students from Latino/a communities within the United States that have more communal ways of living and being faithful. The core ideas of Ubuntu theology may also make sense to liberation theologians, feminist and womanist thinkers, and others whose work has always been concerned with individuals in relationship to communities. For teachers and students who are from the dominant White culture within the United States or from other Western cultures where individualism is prized, Ubuntu theology may seem strange and challenging. Still, it is likely that Ubuntu theology can be useful to persons from all over as we try to implement a greater concern for relationality in our approach to writing within theological education.

The next pages first offer a brief map of Ubuntu theology, touching briefly on the theological anthropology and epistemology offered by Ubuntu thinkers, with particular focus on some key dimensions of Ubuntu's *imago Dei,* the theology of how human beings are made in the image of God, and Ubuntu's epistemology. Then, we turn to and

spend additional pages considering the ethical invitation that Ubuntu presents to North American theological educators as we work with our students on writing. Ubuntu ethical theology invites practitioners in Africa and around the world to acknowledge the necessity of our relationships and to consider the community above other concerns. The primary, though not exclusive, voice representing Ubuntu will be that of Tutu because of the volume of writing he has done on Ubuntu over the many years of his ministry, his accessibility to non-African theologians, and the fact that his voice has already been explored in Chapter Three. Additionally, Tutu offers a strong voice for this conversation about students' theological writing because, as has already been pointed out, in the 1960s, he was a non-Western student seeking theological education in a Western institution in England. Tutu experienced in England what many of today's international students (and, in fact, some students from non-dominant languages, cultures, and educational backgrounds in the United States) experience in theological education in the United States. Finally, this chapter brings Denise Ackermann, a White South African feminist theologian, into the conversation to further develop the ethical dimensions Ubuntu theology through her own approach to dealing with difference in the search for unity.

The goal of this chapter is to argue that the wisdom of the Ubuntu perspective helps theological educators understand that students are enabled to construct voices and transform themselves for their vocational aims when we teach them how to be good writers who know how to relate effectively to their varied readers rather than expecting them to demonstrate good writing about an idea without any attention to the relational process that writing invites. When students write about any theological topic, their approach to that topic and the voice that they construct depends upon their understanding

of their relationship to their audience and that audience's expectations; this chapter argues that theological educators must assist students to develop an awareness of the relational and communicative dimensions of their writing in addition to working to understand ideas through their writing. The hope is that, by making this pedagogical shift, students' learning—and the students themselves—will be transformed in and through their theological writing so that they will construct stronger, clearer voices that can contribute to the greater good of all in the academy, church, and society.

II. *Ubuntu Theology: An Introduction*

The basic idea behind Ubuntu theology is encapsulated in the Nguni[216] aphorism "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*,"[217] which signifies that a human being belongs to and with other people. This is a central idea in African philosophy that has been incorporated into Christian thinking and has become important to African theologians who are developing theologies from within their own context. The aphorism and the larger philosophical idea that it points to have also been shared with theologians and ministers around the world by African scholars who believe Ubuntu has something to offer people outside of Africa. For example, in a 1998 speech given to 750 Anglican bishops at the Lambeth Conference in England, Denise M. Ackermann, a White South African Anglican feminist theologian, developed her entire message around this saying. Ackermann translated the adage into English the way that many African theologians do, telling the bishops that it means the

[216] Nguni languages include Zulu and Xhosa, amongst several others.
[217] Denise M. Ackermann, *Becoming Fully Human: An Ethic of Relationship in Difference and Otherness*, EDS Occasional Papers No. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Episcopal Divinity School, March 1999), 5. See Footnote 12 for the original saying in Nguni.

following: "A person is a person through other persons."[218] At the heart of Ubuntu is the idea that a human being does not and cannot exist without others. As Christian thinkers from Africa understand it, this aphorism points to a theological anthropology that asserts we are made in the image of God as relational and interconnected. For Christians working with Ubuntu thought, it is an epistemology that asserts we are able to know and to create knowledge along with other people. Theologians understand Ubuntu as an ethic that asserts we must attend to these relationships to honor not only the individual, but also the whole of our communities.

For many Western, especially North American, thinkers and practitioners, Ubuntu theology is not easy to grasp because its attention to the human being-in-relation is antithetical to our obsession with the human being-as-individual. The foundational anthropology, epistemology, and ethic of Ubuntu fly in the face of most North Americans' individualistic assumptions about the nature of the human being, of knowledge, and of our relations with each other. As this chapter demonstrates, Western scholars of Ubuntu theology wrestle with this challenge, acknowledging how difficult it can be for those of us working from within the context of the United States and, more widely, the West, to think about life and learning in terms of relationship and community rather than in terms of individual achievement. This chapter addresses the challenge of bringing Ubuntu into focus for Western eyes and ears so that it might be useful in theological education in general and theological writing in particular.

In addition to Ubuntu presenting a challenge because it is an entirely different way of thinking, acting and being human, Ubuntu also resists exact definition, intellectual analysis, and systematization that might allow its features to easily be seen in isolation.

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[218] Ackermann, *Becoming Fully Human*, 5.

South African theologians Mluleki Mnyala and Mokgethi Motlhabi wrestle with this problem in "The African Concept of Ubuntu/Botho and Its Socio-Moral Significance" (2005), asserting that it is very difficult to define Ubuntu precisely. To this end, Mnyala and Motlhabi quote another theologian, L.J. Sebidi, who says,

> Defining an idea like 'ubuntu' is akin to trying to give a definition of 'time.' Everybody seems to know what 'time' is until they are asked to define it or detail its essential characteristics without which 'time' could not be 'time.'"[219]

As an ancient and complex pan-African cultural, philosophical, and theological idea and a way of life, Ubuntu is not simple to take apart and nail down. Still, Mnyala and Motlhabi make the effort, finally determining that Ubuntu is

> a spiritual foundation, an inner state, an orientation, and a good disposition that motivates, challenges, and makes one perceive, feel and act in a humane way towards others. It is a way of life that seeks to promote and manifest itself and is best realized or evident in harmonious relations in society.[220]

As a way of life and a spiritual foundation for social harmony, Ubuntu sheds light on the ways in which we might best relate to each other. It is an ancient spiritual principle, an approach to everyday living today, and a vision for the future, all in one.

One way for Western thinkers and educators to grapple with understanding this complex, non-Western philosophical idea that has become part of African theological discourse and practice is to consider a central image employed by Tutu in some of his writing about Ubuntu, that of the bundle. In a 1986 sermon, delivered at his enthronement as Archbishop of Cape Town at St. George's Cathedral during the apartheid era, Tutu told worshippers:

> We Africans speak about a concept difficult to render in English. We speak of *Ubuntu* or *botho*. You know when it is there and it is obvious when it is absent. It

[219] L.J. Sebidi, qtd. in Mluleki Mnyaka and Mokgethi Motlhabi, "The African Concept of Ubuntu/Botho and Its Socio-Moral Significance," *Black Theology: An International Journal* 3.2 (2005), 216.
[220] Mnyaka and Motlhabi, "The African Concept," 218.

> has to do with what it means to be truly human, it refers to gentleness, to compassion, to hospitality, to openness to others, to vulnerability, to be available for others and to know that you are bound up with them in the bundle of life, for a person is only a person through other persons.[221]

Hard to translate into English, Ubuntu goes deep beneath the surface of everyday human existence to point to our fundamental connectedness. Yet it also implores us to live our everyday lives out of a recognition of that interdependence. For African theologians and Western interpreters alike, Ubuntu is difficult to pin down in words but easily known when experienced. For all of us, Ubuntu invites us to see, feel, and hear our relationality underneath our obvious differences and to think and behave in a manner that honors and respects the ways in which we are bound together in the bundle of life through offering compassion and hospitality. This focus on relationality—of being part of a bundle of life—is a very different orientation for student writers, who typically feel they are writing in isolation against a clock, all the while fearing their professors' responses to their work.

A Christian image that connects to Tutu's bundle of life is the idea that we are one human family created in the image of God. Tutu writes about this in *God Has A Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time* (2004), echoing biblical passages from the Gospels and from Paul's letters, which stress the strong connections amongst people in the community of followers around Jesus and amongst the early Christian communities. Tutu envisions these communities as models for us today when he writes of what he believes is God's radical dream for humanity:

> In God's family, there are no outsiders. All are insiders. Black and white, rich and poor, gay and straight, Jew and Arab, Palestinian and Israeli, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Serb and Albanian, Hutu and Tutsi, Muslim and Christian, Buddhist and Hindu, Pakistani and Indian—all belong. […] And it is a radical thing that Jesus says that we are members of one family. We belong. So Arafat and Sharon

[221] Desmond Tutu, "Agents of Transfiguration" [1986] in *The Rainbow People of God: The Making of A Peaceful Revolution*, ed. by John Allen (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 125. Italics, Tutu's.

> belong together. Yes, George Bush and Osama bin Laden belong together. God says, All, all are My children. It is shocking. It is radical.[222]

In this way of thinking, people who think and act as if they are fully separate from others, even people who live as enemies to others, are part of one family made and loved by God. For Tutu, the larger reality that we are all insiders—all in it together as a human family—is an Ubuntu Christian perspective. The next section explores more fully this Ubuntu perspective regarding our theological anthropology, our fundamental nature as human beings.

A Relational, Ongoing Theological Anthropology: Imago Dei *in Ubuntu Thought*

The theological anthropology of Ubuntu emphasizes our createdness as people who belong to and with other people. As Tutu imagines it, each person's basic nature is to be part of this bundle of life, or family, from which the individual cannot fully separate or be separated, no matter how "different" she appears or feels. He grounds this idea in the Christian tradition of the *imago Dei*, or image of God, in various ways. Writing from what he and his daughter, Mpho Tutu, imagine is the divine vantage point, Desmond and Mpho together share a prayer with readers at the end of a chapter in *Made for Goodness: And Why This Makes All the Difference* (2010). This mutual prayer, shared from what the authors propose is the perspective of God, says,

> I made you for myself,
> I wanted you.
> I made you like myself,
> I made you good and I made you free.

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[222] Desmond Tutu, *God Has A Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 20. See, for example, Paul's letter to the Galatians, which says, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (3:28, NRSV). All biblical quotations are taken from *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, New Revised Standard Version (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

> Listen! For I have carved in you the heart to hear.
> Listen and know that I am near.
> I am as close as a prayer.
> I am breathing in your breath.[223]

The message in this prayer is a relational one: God made human beings to be in relationship with God, giving us qualities of goodness and freedom and the ability to listen and hear God. To be made in the image of God is to be made to breathe, to speak, to pray, to listen, to choose. This is an *imago Dei* that is not specific to one person in a single body that is like a divine body, but is based, instead, on the Ubuntu belief in our ability to act out of our relational and caring nature. This, Tutu says, is "a shining thread woven into the fabric of our being."[224]

The idea of *imago Dei* informed by Ubuntu has strong roots in the biblical story. In his 2004 book, *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*, Tutu expounds on this *imago Dei* image in relation to the Bible. He writes, "We know that we are one family not only because archaeologists tell us that all humankind originated in Africa but also because the Bible tells us so in the creation story."[225] He then recounts the creation story of Adam and Eve in Genesis with this idea of connectedness and interrelatedness at the fore. In a temporal sense, Adam exists first in relation to God, then to the animals and the whole of nature, and, finally, to Eve, whom God created because "It is not good for us to be alone. […] We need other human beings in order to be human."[226] The Ubuntu interpretive lens operating in this reading of Genesis 2.4b-25 emphasizes not the individuality of Adam or Eve but their need to belong to each other, to the world, and to

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[223] Desmond Tutu and Mpho A. Tutu, *Made for Goodness: And Why This Makes All the Difference* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 16-17.
[224] Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 15.
[225] Tutu, *God Has a Dream*, 24.
[226] Tutu, *God Has a Dream*, 25.

God. As Tutu puts it, "The first law of our being is that we are set in a delicate network of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God's creation."[227] We belong to the whole because we are made as part of the whole. The image of God is people in relationship, not a single person alone.

However, the Ubuntu understanding of the human being is not static as if we were created as part of a human community and that is all we need to know. Ubuntu points to our unfolding relatedness to others; thus, *imago Dei* is ongoing. This aspect of Ubuntu's theological anthropology is articulated well by Ackermann, who shared the following image with the Anglican clerics at Lambeth in 1998:

> In this boundless human web I acquire my humanity as something which comes to me as a gift. My humanity is found, shaped, and nurtured in and through the humanity of others. I can only exercise my humanity by being in relationship with others, and there is no growth, happiness, or fulfillment for me apart from other human beings.[228]

Each person is part of a web of humanity, and it is through our relationships in this web that we create our humanity. *The imago Dei*, then, is an image of the human being as part of a continuously unfolding web of relationships rather than a fixed status that we inhabit. We live into being made in the image of God by learning from others and then by exercising our humanity in relationship to others. We do not get to claim that we are made in the image of God and then leave it at that. Instead, we are living and growing into this image as we relate to other persons throughout our lifetimes.[229]

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[227] Tutu, *God Has a Dream,* 25.
[228] Ackermann, *Becoming Fully Human*, 5.
[229] Feminist theologians and others have criticized the emphasis on relationality because, for women, this has sometimes meant being encouraged to remain in abusive and destructive relationships. Ubuntu theologians like Luke Lungile Pato and Julius Gathogo take this critique seriously in their own work, recognizing that harmful relationships are not acceptable within healthy families and communities. This is why they and others, such as Ackermann and Tutu, have developed Ubuntu theology to include an ethic of mutuality and respect, which is described later in this chapter.

Other Ubuntu theologians underscore that the *imago Dei* involves a sense of growth in relationship to others. For example, in "Forging an Understanding of Black Humanity Through Relationship: An Ubuntu Perspective" (2010), Berrisford Lewis, a British thinker and educator specializing in Black theology, writes that Ubuntu "emphasizes personal empowerment and limitless potential through an understanding of identity construction as an ongoing process of 'becoming through relationship with the other.'"[230] Like Tutu, Lewis, says that this human identity comes from the biblical story starting with Genesis and continues through the story of salvation told in the Gospels and in our lives of faith. Our "humanity is forever unfolding," Lewis asserts, and we are "co-creators with God through Jesus" in a process of reconciliation and healing across differences and imperfections.[231] Ubuntu theologians, then, point not only to how we were created at the beginning, but also to how we live our lives in the present and to how we aim to live in unity in the future. These Christian thinkers assert that we must continually participate with God through Jesus in creating our humanity with each other.

Because students are writing in an institutional situation in which the exercise of power is weighted toward the dominance of professors, it should be noted that this theological anthropology of becoming human with and through others does not vacate concerns about power relations within the matrix of oppression and domination, which were considered in Chapter Three. Rather, the *imago Dei* opens up possibilities for considering the complexity of human relations as expressed in and through the four domains of power—structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal—as they come to play in the academic writing process. The Ubuntu vision of *imago Dei* reinforces the

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[230] Berrisford Lewis, ""Forging an Understanding of Black Humanity Through Relationship: An Ubuntu Perspective," *Black Theology: An International Journal* 8.1 (2010), 70-71.
[231] Lewis, "Forging an Understanding," 79.

underlying reasons why we must pay attention to and address our power relations in and through our writing: because we are always in a process of change in all these relations. Our participation in the ongoing process of becoming human beings-in-relation requires us to be aware of our socio-political context and the ways in which power is exercised within it, for this is where the process of becoming unfolds. The *imago Dei*, as understood through an Ubuntu lens, charges theological educators with the responsibility of facilitating student becoming. Writing is an excellent way for us to assume that responsibility pedagogically.

Ubuntu Epistemology: The Connection of Knowing and Knowledge to the Imago Dei

Because we are relational beings, our living into having been made in the image of God means learning from and with others. Connected to the *imago Dei* of ongoing relationship with others, Ubuntu features an epistemology that is very unusual to Western, especially North American, eyes and ears because it does not hinge on individual demonstrations of knowledge. For Ubuntu theologians, knowing is not something practiced by the individual alone, and knowledge cannot be possessed by a single person alone. Instead, knowledge is learned through and with other people. The Ubuntu approach to knowledge and knowing stand in contrast to the Cartesian Enlightenment dictum, *Cogito ergo sum*—I think; therefore, I am. Ubuntu says, instead, "I am because we are,"[232] which suggests that what and who I am and what I know is possible because of the community.

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[232] John Mbiti, qtd. in Michael Battle, "A Theology of Community: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu," *Interpretation* (April 2000), 178. This is Mbiti's translation of the Nguni aphorism "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*," which lies at the heart of Ubuntu thinking.

There appears to be a disconnection between the two aphorisms—*I think; therefore I am* and *I am because we are*—but the African perspective would suggest that it is not: being-in-community is key to any knowledge or understanding we might claim. Western epistemology is built on an understanding of the knower as a single individual, while African epistemology assumes a collective knower. Michael Battle, a Black theologian and Anglican priest who studied with and was ordained by Tutu, explains this difference in this way:

> Many Western views of personhood focus primarily on the lone, self-determined individual. The African view of a person depicts a person in the context of that person's surrounding environment. In the African concept of Ubuntu, human community is vital for the individual's acquisition of personhood; however, in Western thought, especially in existentialism, the individual alone defines self-existence.[233]

The effects of this African view of personhood for epistemology are that, from an Ubuntu perspective, a person can only learn and grow and become a full human being within a rich and peopled context. The community in which the knower relates to others and shares with them is the precise place where learning can unfold. The Western idea that a person can learn without any reference to other people or her context makes no sense within an Ubuntu framework.

Battle clarifies this relational and community-oriented epistemological perspective further: "According to much current African scholarship, African epistemology begins with community and moves to individuality, whereas Western epistemology moves from individuality to community."[234] Many Westerners assume that the individual knower comes first and then relates to others in knowing and learning. By assuming that knowledge and knowing start with the relational and communal context,

[233] Battle, "A Theology of Community," 179-180.
[234] Battle, "A Theology of Community," 178.

Ubuntu theologians are suggesting that we learn first from and through other people. In both the West and in Africa, our parents and grandparents, our early childhood school teachers, our Sunday school teachers, other children, and others in our lives teach us how to be human, creating knowledge and practices with us as we age. Later on, as we come into adulthood, we create knowledge and practices with other adults and help children and young people learn them. From Ubuntu theologians, theological educators in the West can learn that this process of coming to know with and through others is not something to be grown out of—to be individuated from, as if we could leave it behind. Instead, this relational process is to be recognized and embraced as a strength of our humanity. The individual can and does have her own ideas and ways of doing things, but she always has these ideas and acts with reference to a community and her relations with others.

John Allen, a White South African who was Tutu's long-term press secretary and has been his authorized biographer, writes that Tutu understands the primary Ubuntu aphorism in opposition to Descartes' famous line. Allen asserts that Tutu's interpretation of the Ubuntu saying means something akin to John Donne's poetic line, "'No man is an island': 'None of us comes into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings…The solitary, isolated human being is a contradiction in terms.'"[235] We cannot be or do or think alone. Thus, the essential structure of knowledge is forged in relationships and shared by a community, not held by single person. This is a perspective that has the potential to reshape learning in theological education in the United States,

[235] John Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace: The Authorized Biography of Desmond Tutu* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 347.

including theological writing. It can do so by reframing the way we think of writing: instead of writing being a project of the individual alone, it can be understood as part of a shared process of generating knowledge in community.[236]

The One and the Many: Individual Gifts Shared in Community

Ultimately, individual human knowing and being (and acting) are made possible through the individual's relationships with other people and with the whole family of humanity. But this one human community is reflected not in our sameness but in our unity and in our variety. Tutu is clear that we are one and that we are a diverse many. For example, in *God Has a Dream,* he echoes the Pauline understanding of the one body with many members*,* saying that

> Another characteristic of the family is its willingness to share. The early church went so far as to have its members selling their property, each refusing to claim as his exclusive property what had belonged to him before. They had all things in common. When the one part suffered, the whole suffered with it, and when one part prospered, then the whole prospered with it. There was a mutuality in the relationship in which all gave and all received. Some gave more conspicuously in spiritual things while others gave in material gifts.[237]

Each person brings gifts to the larger whole, and this can include knowledge and spiritual experience as well as money or other talents. In terms of theological anthropology, Christians are, from the Pauline perspective, "the body of Christ and individually members of it" and to each of these individuals "is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."[238] When each person's gifts are shared fully with the whole, she is able to contribute to the whole, thereby making the whole prosperous. From a

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[236] Writing assignments that privilege learning through writing as a shared process include group writing assignments and group presentations that require students to work together to teach their peers. Specific examples of these are included in Chapter Five.
[237] Tutu, *God Has A Dream*, 22-23.
[238] 1 Corinthians 12:27, 7.

theological anthropological perspective, sharing gifts is part of what makes us human. From an epistemological perspective, an individual's idea only becomes fully realized and understood when it is shared with others. From an ethical perspective, the willingness to share with and an openness to others' sharing within diverse community is a key tenet of Ubuntu theology.

In relation to theological writing, the Ubuntu perspective helps us see that a student writer does not write in isolation in her attic garret, as if she were thinking alone, bringing herself and her ideas into being out of nowhere. She is not an island. Instead, the student is always writing in a complex relational context that makes claims on her and invites the sharing of her gifts even as it impedes her in certain ways. These claims include those of the community in which she studies and for which she studies, those of the readers with whom she is communicating, and those of the larger human family to whom she is accountable. From the Ubuntu perspective, the student writer only fully embraces her humanity when she is writing with this strong concern for her context, the community or communities in which she resides and works, and her relationships with her reader(s). She is both willing to share her gifts and to engage those of others, including those unlike her. A theological education that embraces Ubuntu theology would advocate for the teaching of theological writing to be focused on developing these dimensions of relatedness in the student's unfolding humanity.

III. ***Ubuntu Theological Ethics: Living into Relationship in and through Writing***

To understand more deeply the implications of Ubuntu theology for theological writing and teaching, it is necessary to focus more intently on one aspect of Ubuntu rather

than trying to juggle multiple aspects, so we will leave behind epistemology and theological anthropology to focus on ethics. As mentioned above, Ubuntu has a strong sense of theological anthropology, a robust epistemology, and a compelling ethic, and they are all tangled together in the bundle that is Ubuntu thinking, resisting the kind of analysis required for Western academic writing. Ubuntu proposes the human bundle, but its articulation is also in a bundle! However, to move forward so that we might better understand Ubuntu from a North American and Western perspective, we must choose to examine one portion of the bundle more thoroughly—and to attempt to analyze it for the purposes of a dissertation for a North American audience.

Ubuntu ethics is the primary focus here, first, because it is concerned with practical matters of relating to others in everyday life and can help theological educators to think concretely about the implications for Ubuntu thought in our writing pedagogies. Ubuntu ethics has been chosen specifically because it offers a set of relational ideas that can assist theological educators in re-framing our pedagogical work in relation to student writing. The way in which Ubuntu theology advocates that human beings live together amidst our growing diversity offers a key insight both to the educators who are considering examining their teaching of writing in the current context of theological education and to the diverse students who are learning to do that writing. Ubuntu offers both an ideal for living together and a practical approach for making the ideal come to life. Because Ubuntu theology is grounded in the notion of our interdependence and connectedness and proposes specific ethical actions in terms of our ways of living our faith, we now turn to Ubuntu ethics as a resource for rethinking our pedagogy of theological writing.

The Ethic of Ubuntu: Seeking the Ideal

Living with and into the recognition that we are human because of our relationships with others (theological anthropology) and that we are knowers because of others (epistemology) means reaching toward an Ubuntu ideal in our relationships. This ethical ideal is something to be lived into and refined as life goes on. As Ubuntu's theological anthropology suggests, we are always living in and toward our human nature as creatures who relate and belong. The ideal is not something fixed that we can reach; it is part of our ongoing process of becoming the *imago Dei*. In *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Tutu describes the ideal in terms of its relation to our fundamental humanness. Tutu says that Ubuntu "speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, '*Yu, u nobuntu'*; 'Hey, so-and-so has *ubuntu*.' Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have."[239] Having Ubuntu means offering generously to others, extending a hand in friendship, showing compassion and care for others, and providing hospitality for them. In South African society, a person is praised for seeking to embody these qualities rather than for her self-sufficiency and individual achievement.

Within the context of theological education, Tutu might prefer to ask how well a student of theology has contributed to creating a space in which others can feel welcome and included and heard rather than asking how high her grade was on a final essay. Did she share with other students, offering them help as they struggled to learn the material? Did she listen to her peers as they sought to learn? Or did she stay at home to memorize the answers in isolation so that she might get the highest grade on the exam? Did she

[239] Tutu, "Chapter Two: Nuremberg or National Amnesia? A Third Way," in *No Future Without Forgiveness.*

attend to the needs of her readers as she wrote, helping them, for instance, by including a clear thesis and internal cues pointing to the structure of her argument? An Ubuntu approach would uphold the student who is able to contribute effectively not only to the immediate academic community but also to the wider church and society. An Ubuntu perspective would also consider the overall health of the community in which each student functions: Is there space for each student to share her experiences and insights? Are other students and the faculty listening? How well does the institution support students' development of their voices so that they might contribute to the immediate learning community and beyond? The Ubuntu ideal of learning in community is a vision for what good writing and pedagogy can be.

The Ethic of Ubuntu: Living the Real

To construct a life around Ubuntu insights, a person must make the ideal real. But how does one do this? Tutu suggests that there is a proper disposition out of which each one of us must live to enact Ubuntu in our lives. In *No Future Without Forgiveness*, he asserts,

> A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.[240]

In order to be generous, hospitable, caring, and compassionate, a person must understand that she belongs to and with others and then must relate to others with openness, showing support for others' achievements. She can live this way because she knows that she is

[240] Tutu, "Chapter Two: Nuremberg or National Amnesia? A Third Way," in *No Future Without Forgiveness.*

part of something larger than herself and that the other person's successes can help the whole. Put to good use, each person's gifts help all of us. Tutu wants us to see, on the other hand, that we are all less when one person is denigrated and oppressed—when her gifts are not appreciated. When we treat even one person as less than human, the whole is made less, and each person, including the oppressor, is dehumanized. In this way, our relationships to others reflect our relationships with ourselves and with the whole of humanity and with God. Practicing dehumanization of any kind by asserting domination over any person leads toward diminishment of us all. Practicing concretely the way of Ubuntu through openness, generosity, and hospitality leads toward the betterment of us all.

Living in such a way that affirms others' gifts and engages with them in sharing life with others, rather than living isolated lives, leads to reaching together toward the highest good, which is harmonious social relationships. Tutu tells his readers,

> Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the *summum bonum*—the greatest good. Anything that subverts, that undermines this sought-after good, is to be avoided like the plague. Anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness, are corrosive of this good.[241]

Instead of competing, we work toward sharing. Instead of resenting others, we work toward affirming them. These form the pathway toward this highest good of Ubuntu, which places the social connectedness that we share from the moment we are born at the center of our sense of ourselves as human beings. This is not an effort to make us all alike, but it promotes a way for each of us to contribute to something we hold together instead of to our own isolated ends.

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[241] Tutu, "Chapter Two: Nuremberg or National Amnesia? A Third Way," in *No Future Without Forgiveness.*

If a student writer is encouraged to take this ideal *summum bonum* seriously, she will write not only for her grade, but also for what she can learn from and contribute to others and to her community through her thinking and learning. Rather than seeing students as individuals in competition with each other for the highest grade point average in a class or the most unimpeded linear path through a degree program, theological educators can see them as persons in relation to the whole learning community who contribute unique gifts for the benefit of all. Students can also be seen as teachers—people who are able to share knowledge and insights from their own experiences in community. This approach can manifest itself concretely, for example, in students' presentations of written projects to a whole class or the defense of masters theses in conversation with a group of students and professors instead of in conversation with a couple of professors alone. Theological education, fueled by an Ubuntu ethic, can help students cultivate better relational skills through writing in a rigorous and social way, which allows them to communicate better with others in and out of school.[242]

IV. *The Ubuntu in Everyday Life: Dealing with Difference, the Really Real*

All of this nice talk about being generous and open-minded, about not feeling threatened by others' abilities, about seeing one's self as part of a larger whole sounds great, but where does the rubber meet the road? Positing writing projects in theological education that invite the community to participate is a nice idea, but we all know that we do not agree with or get along with everyone—how do we face that reality when we are striving for coherence in community? How do we address issues of power when our learning depends on each other? We may be "real" when we think and talk about living

[242] Examples of how this process might unfold in a classroom setting are shared in Chapter Five.

concretely and practically into the ideal of an Ubuntu person in particular ways, but how do we do so in a broken world? At best, our moments of wholeness are just that—moments. How can we deal with the fact that, in the diverse communities that are North American theological schools today, there are differences between us (and divisions amongst us) that prevent us from saying to our fellow learners, with Tutu, "'*Yu, u nobuntu'*; 'Hey, so-and-so has *Ubuntu*'"?

Denise Ackermann offers a response to this question in *Becoming Fully Human: An Ethic of Relationship in Difference and Otherness* (1999), which is the published version of her lecture to the Anglican bishops at Lambeth in 1998. While she advocates strongly for the perspective of Ubuntu, she is also cognizant of the difficulties in living into the ideals espoused by Ubuntu theologians and ethicists. As intersectional theorists point out, these difficulties are due to the fact that we live in relation to the matrix of oppression and domination and are subject to the exercise of power in the four domains—structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. Although we may strive for unity, we are different people and we sometimes have problems with each other and experience conflicts rooted in the exercise of power by people in different relations to the domains of power. Holding up the idea of relationship as an ideal does not provide an easy panacea to the world's problems because living a relationship is not the same as thinking about an ideal relationship. Ackermann advises the bishops, mostly men, who have many opportunities to exercise power: "Not all relationships are good. Relationships can be oppressive. Personal relationships are often the terrain in which abusive power is exercised."[243] Differences do not always cause difficulties, but they can and do create imbalances and even abuses due to the fact that they are unfolding in a world in which

[243] Ackermann, *Becoming Fully Human*, 5.

the domains of power within the matrix of oppression and domination operate in and through our institutions, government bureaucracy, culture and ideas, and everyday relationships.

Thus, Ackermann invites us to be clearer about the kind of relationships we are aiming for when we seek to live out of an Ubuntu ethic in the midst of such diversity. To this end, she told the 750 clerics, who hail from cultures all over the world and sit atop the hierarchy of the Anglican Church:

> The idea of relationship needs to be qualified. For relationships to be right, loving, and just, they have to be mutual and reciprocal. Fully human relationships cannot be one-sided. They can only be created out of mutual interdependence and they flourish only when both parties work on them.[244]

Reciprocity. Interdependence. Mutuality. These are the characteristics of healthy human relationships that Ackermann encourages the bishops to live into. Despite their hold on power in the Anglican Church and in the societies from which they come, they are responsible for participating in fully human relationships, not ones in which they exercise their power and assert dominion over others. Ackermann tells these powerful bishops that they must see themselves in an ongoing mutual relationship with the great variety of persons whom they lead, not as the sole determiners of those unfolding relationships. If these bishops are responsible for living in mutual, interdependent relationship with others, why should not theology students be responsible as well? Why not theological educators, too?

Ackerman further defines mutuality in order to be clear about what she is saying. She tells her audience, "Mutuality is the reciprocal interdependence of equals. Interdependence and equality are the opposite of egocentricity—the concern for self at

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[244] Ackermann, *Becoming Fully Human,* 5.

the expense of the other. The practice of mutuality is a way of loving which affirms the goodness of each person and our need for one another."[245] To love others, as we are called to do by the biblical witness, we must give up our egocentricity and our tendency to focus on ourselves alone. For the theology student, this means letting go of her worries about her grades only and thinking more about developing mutual relationships with those around her in school, in the church, and in the world. For theological educators, this means focusing less on driving students in isolation to write in order to create a final product for grading, and becoming more concerned with how students communicate in an attitude of mutuality and reciprocity with their readers and listeners. For example, instead of using theological jargon in an unthinking and uncritical way to sound smart for the sake of a grade, perhaps the student could be encouraged to write by selecting vocabulary more intentionally and with an eye and an ear toward better communication with the multiple audiences to whom she is responsible? Instead of holding back her unconventional ideas, thinking that she will be given a lower grade for sharing them, perhaps she could be mentored toward sharing those ideas in ways that others—even those who disagree—might be able to listen?

As theological educators, we must also ask what mutuality really means. Though we may seek mutuality, not everyone has the same ability to exercise power within the matrix of dominance and oppression due to racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, classism, and so forth. How does mutuality help us deal with the often deep differences between people in the diverse communities that our North American theological institutions embody? Concretely, how do we relate to people who seem to us to be most unlike us, or "other"? If we are to promote mutual relationships, must we flatten out our

[245] Ackermann, *Becoming Fully Human,* 5.

qualities and gifts in acts of conformity for the sake of community? Do we have to all be and act and think alike, to fall into line with what seems to be the *status quo*? The answer to these questions is an emphatic, NO. Ackermann says,

> Mutual relationship does not do away with difference. Each person is a distinct individual who acts, thinks, and feels in relation to the other's actions, thoughts, and feelings. The other remains truly other. Respect for the other, or lack of it, is a matter of intention. You choose whether you will respect me despite our differences across race, ideology, sexual orientation, and culture; I choose whether I will respect you.[246]

We are many members of one body, and that theological anthropological reality cannot and must not be avoided in our work. In theological education, this means that we cannot wave a magic wand and make everyone alike, force people to get along, or do away with power differentials just because we envision an ideal world in which we live in unity and wholeness. Our living into our full humanity requires awareness and choice on the part of each person: the knowledge that people are not the same and that many gifts are needed in community, the awareness of power imbalances in our social relations, the choice by a student to engage with others who are unlike her and might make her uncomfortable, the choice to respect the other whom she does not know. She must intend to live in this way. She must practice living Ubuntu.

Practicing living Ubuntu is exactly what theological writing can help students do as they prepare for lives as ministers, teachers, activists, preachers, spiritual directors, pastoral caregivers, and so forth. Writing with a robust understanding of the rhetorical dimensions of the work can help a student move through the choice to hear other voices, to engage in relationships with thinkers and practitioners who might present ideas and approaches antithetical to her own ideas and ways of doing things. Writing with an

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[246] Ackermann, *Becoming Fully Human,* 5.

understanding of how voice is constructed within a social world that includes inequality, discrimination, and oppression can provide a practice space not only for relating to a primary or intended audience, but also for relating to potential conversation partners who might be very different, difficult, and/or uncomfortable for the writer. Writing gives a student the needed opportunity to construct a voice that might be further developed for other audiences, other contexts, and for other occasions and presentations. By regarding student writers as undertaking writing projects as persons in community, theological educators have the opportunity to assist students in determining how to make the choice to live in healthy, mutual relationship with others. Writing is one of the best tools we have available for encouraging the development of critical thinking skills along with critical relational skills for the sake of better and more relevant communication within the academy, church, and society.

Not to engage in this effort to create mutual and reciprocal relationships can lead to the destruction of our schools as learning communities; of our churches as communities for healing, sharing, interpreting, and making meaning; and of our societies as viable and coherent entities. Ackermann emphasizes this necessity, saying: "If we do not act in relationship there is no hope for the building of community. Community is the result of mutual relationships as well as the place in which these relationships are put to the test. […] All communities have to deal with the failure of their members to support each other and the common good."[247] Without such a testing ground in our schools of theology and ministry, what hope have we in sending out graduates who have practiced relationships in community and know how to work toward mutuality in churches and the wider society in which we live? What hope have we in graduating people who are keenly

[247] Ackermann, *Becoming Fully Human*, 6.

aware of the exercise of power in relation to the matrix of oppression and domination because they have practiced this awareness in and through writing relationally? A divinity school or seminary provides a context in which the nascent minister can learn to deal with successes and failures in relating to others amidst the exercise of power relations and with the rise and fall of communities. Writing with intentionality in constructing one's voice and making choices is one way for students to practice these relationships and to process what they are experiencing regarding community, power, and relationships in other aspects of their educational processes. The outcome of such a robust relational process practiced in and through her writing could be the ethical transformation of the student herself rather than simply getting a final A on a paper.

Putting an even finer point on the necessity of intentionality in creating human community, Ackermann turns to her Catholic colleague, Black theologian Shawn Copeland, to describe the ways in which we must proceed in living into our Ubuntu human nature. Ackermann writes,

> Community does not just happen. It takes recognition of our interdependence and willingness to carry our differences into what African-American theologian Shawn Copeland describes as "deep-going conversion and serious honest conversation—speaking with head and heart and flesh; listening with head and heart and flesh."[248]

Obviously, community takes hard work and demands a great deal of those participating in it. Building a learning community within theological institutions is no less challenging than in the wider world, especially as we become more multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-linguistic. Teaching students to speak and listen with their heads, hearts, and flesh in and through writing is an excellent way for theological educators to promote relationship through our work in classes and in our oversight of the curricula across our

[248] Ackermann, *Becoming Fully Human,* 6.

theological institutions. This kind of mentorship in writing and listening with the head, heart, and flesh can allow us to have serious and honest conversations about our differences, which can make our deep-going conversion possible as we transform our students and ourselves.

Serious conversations and thorough conversion are possible for students not only within classrooms in reading and discussing texts or in extracurricular offerings, but also through the writing process itself. When student writers pay attention to relationships with their audiences and contexts, they join a conversation that has been going on for over two-thousand years and open themselves up to the possibility of conversion that will allow them to be more fully present for the communities in which they live and serve and work. As Ackermann points out, we are in relationship and community with other human beings because we are in relationship with a God who wants to be in relationship with us.[249] Making these varied relationships possible and positive through the construction of voices must be the goal of theological education in general, and it must also be the goal of theological writing for our students.

V. *The Implications of Ubuntu Theology and Ethics for Teaching Theological Writing*

> Rather than give up something [for Lent], this year I decided to give in to something I've always desired: to find my own voice and share it in a way that helps others face difficult truths.
>
> ~ Stephanie Crumpton[250]

Constructing a theological voice in relationship to others with an eye and ear toward community building is a life-long process modeled by Tutu, Ackermann, and

[249] See Ackermann, *Becoming Fully Human,* 7.
[250] Stephanie Crumpton, "Finding My Voice To Help Others Face Difficult Truths," *Lancaster Online* (Sunday, March 29, 2015), http://lancasteronline.com/opinion/columnists/finding-my-voice-to-help-others-face-difficult-truths/article_73145c62-d3e6-11e4-b12f-337618ab294d.html

other theologians, but it is not a relational process that many in theological education have fully examined in light of our pedagogies. While the endeavor to create a voice to relate to others can be a vital part of the educational process, it is blunted or even hidden due to other priorities, primarily the priority to demonstrate narrow academic abilities in conventional ways in a content area above all. Students, theological educators, and the beneficiaries of good theological education (churches, schools, individuals, other institutions and society in general) forego the opportunity for our theological and civic discourses to be enlivened when we do not attend to the ways that good writers can name injustices, create beauty, articulate ways forward, and effect change in the world and themselves. Our preoccupation with academic utility alone promotes linear (and not necessarily critical) thinking and writing with narrow and, sometimes selfish, goals. Ubuntu theology offers us a way to open up our minds about the potential for writing to enhance the human life and community in and beyond the academy. The insights of Ubuntu theology prod theological educators to reconsider the nature of our writing, our thinking, our knowing, and our senses of ourselves. It pushes us toward an embrace of the human diversity around us, which is rich with cultural ideas, languages, and perspectives that, when shared, could help us learn to be one human family. Seeing and hearing the writer's voice through the lens of Ubuntu, we hear the individual writer within the greater chorus of the whole.

Ubuntu for the Individual Writer

More specifically, Ubuntu has direct implications for student writing in theological education because it affirms the notion of writing as a social activity and the writer as a being in relationship with others in community. As Chapter Two pointed out,

student writers too often see themselves as writing in isolation rather than experiencing their work as an effort to communicate and connect with their readers and the extended audience that they imagine. Because of the individualistic, content-centered environment of academia, they believe that their primary—or only—job is to demonstrate a mastery of subject matter rather than to connect with their reader(s), and this can wreak havoc with their writing, even if they were good writers to begin with. This is because students under pressure panic about their grades and often disconnect from their readers and the context of their work in a fright-induced state. The results can be as diverse as tortured, jargon-filled academic prose, extremely childish writing that seems to indicate that the student has learned nothing, persistent problems with plagiarism derived from over-reliance on outside sources, and even poor attention to their research sources out of fear and misunderstanding. Ubuntu leads students toward seeing themselves as part of something bigger than themselves as individuals; helps them acknowledge that they belong, no matter how "different" they are; gives them a sense that their ideas are part of a shared knowing borne of ongoing relationships with others; and helps them connect to the fact that their writing is an act that contributes to a shared moral world. These realizations are not antithetical to critical thinking but, in fact, bolster and expand critical thinking to include rigorous engagement with the writer's interlocutors (sources), context, and audience as well as the world of ideas.

A theological educator who thinks of writing as an effort to connect and communicate with another person or persons in openness and curiosity can assist a student who is struggling with writing and help her negotiate the risks she must face in expressing her voice. The educator can help that student think about her audience and

what her purposes might need to be *vis-à-vis* that audience. The educator can guide the student to know best when and how to take risks with her subject matter for the benefit of something larger than herself. When a student is encouraged to operate out of a sense of Ubuntu—connectedness—rather than isolation, she begins to have more control over her writing. With guidance, the student can consider matters of relationality throughout the process of writing rather than being driven solely by the notion of handing in a product, often one written just hours before it is due. Writing is now a way for her to practice constructing a voice when presenting an idea or experience or insight to another person rather than producing a static object (a paper) submitted for evaluation and judgment. This relational approach to writing seems entirely more useful to nascent ministers, activists, pastoral counselors, and religious educators than writing an "academic essay" for a grade.

Ubuntu for Global and Intercultural Awareness

Writing informed by Ubuntu foregrounds relationships of mutuality and reciprocity. This can help students transform their own understanding of themselves within their immediate school and church communities, and it gives them an edge when looking to the future of theological education and the role of the church in global society. The world our students will minister in, educate in, and lead in is not the world that many of us may have grown up in. They are part of a vast, diverse, and interconnected world that demands that they recognize and relate to persons who are very different from themselves both in and out of school. Theological writing can help students think through

the issues of diversity and difference and practice communicating to and relating with a wide range of audiences. This is both a practical necessity and a theological good.

When asked about the future of theological education at Vanderbilt Divinity School, the newly-appointed Dean, womanist ethicist Emilie M. Townes, told an interviewer the following: "Christianity has become Southern, African and Latin American. I want us to focus more intentionally on the important integration of intercultural/global, interfaith awareness in our teaching, research and writing as students and faculty think through domestic issues in their world context."[251] This perspective of Christianity and Christian theology as needing a more intercultural and global awareness translates into theological education needing to help Christian leaders develop this awareness. Writing can offer an integrative process to students grappling with the challenges of an intercultural, global, and interfaith awareness in a North American context that is increasing in diversity.

A Return to Voice

In Chapter Two, voice in writing was defined as a process of negotiating relationships borne of a generative struggle to communicate. Voice has to do with understanding one's self, one's audience, context, and the demands of the situation in addition to the subject matter at hand. From a rhetorical standpoint, a writer's voice changes, depending on her time in life and work, her audience, her context, and her subject matter. She may develop one voice to use for giving sermons each Sunday and another for writing op ed pieces for the local newspaper and yet another for publishing a theological essay in a refereed journal. She may choose to mix up these voices at times,

[251] Emilie M. Townes, "Teach, Pray, Lead: An Interview," *Vanderbilt Magazine* 94.3 (Summer 2013), 28.

using more than one in a single piece of writing. Having a good theological education in the construction of voice can help the student by giving her a way of thinking about and practicing this process that encourages her to be more intentional in what she is doing and transparent with herself about her purposes. Theological writing in an academic setting can help her relate to others when she is guided through this generative struggle by her professors.

This concern about the importance of constructing a theological voice, which has been expressed to me so often by theology students, is also articulated explicitly by working theologians and theological educators. For example, Stephanie Crumpton, a womanist theologian, theological educator, and ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, recently published a Lenten reflection in *Lancaster Online*, the newspaper of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, about this very thing. In "Finding My Voice to Help Others Face Difficult Truths" (March 29, 2015), Crumpton writes of the need to find her voice so that she can work on the very challenging issue of racism. She says that

> writing is where I encounter these difficult truths. Writing is the place where I encounter not just myself, but also God. This is hard, because I realize that the words that spill onto the page show me the 'me' that God is trying to grow me into. I shake my head often when I write because (if the truth be told) half of the time I don't want to hear what I see on those pages.[252]

For Crumpton, writing is a process of coming to understand not just ideas about racism in the United States. It is about coming to hear one's self and God and has to do with learning to relate what is uncomfortable and difficult to an audience. Crumpton speaks of her writing as a theologian, minister, and teacher as being a matter of relationship and a concern for community. A shift in our approach to teaching writing in theological education could help students to practice just this kind of constructive process that

[252] Crumpton, "Finding My Voice."

Crumpton describes and in which she engaged by writing this theological reflection for her local newspaper.

Crumpton's way of seeing her writing as part of something bigger than she is pushes her to take risks that she would not embrace otherwise. She admits to her readers, that, for her as a Black woman living in a racist society, "Giving up silence in the face of bigotry is hard."[253] It is perilous work to write frankly about the operations of discriminatory power within the matrix of oppression and domination. It is difficult to speak truth to power. Writing in this way takes nerve and a willingness to see one's self and voice as a needed part of a larger whole, even when the audience may not be desirous of hearing it. Giving students within the context of theological education opportunities to develop voices in and through writing that resonate with the work they are called to do can help them work through the challenges of rejecting silence as a way of life. Ubuntu theology helps us see that our pedagogical work as theological educators teaching writing has the great potential to support and provide spaces in which students can learn to share their gifts in a broken world that desperately needs them.

In her book *After the Locusts: Letters from a Landscape of Faith* (2003), Denise Ackermann writes in a letter to her granddaughter that "identity is shaped in ongoing dialogue with others. As I understand it, my identity is partially shaped by being in conversation with you. After all, you have made me a grandmother! But I am also other things, shaped by other conversations."[254] We could substitute the word "voice" in each place where Ackermann uses the word "identity" to effectively convey the sense of voice that this dissertation strives for. Voice is shaped by ongoing dialogue with others. It is not

[253] Crumpton, "Finding My Voice."
[254] Denise M. Ackermann, *After the Locusts: Letters from a Landscape of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003),11.

the same as identity, as it arises in a written text, but it is related to identity in that the writer is negotiating relationships with herself, with other people, with ideas, with the world, and with God. Helping a student construct her voice in writing is a way of helping her to think about her identity as a minister, pastoral caregiver, activist, or educator so that she can transform herself into the kind of leader she wants and feels called to be.

Writing with the intention of creating a voice can give a student tools for living a life of faith in a complex and diverse world. In her letter to her granddaughter, Ackermann links identity and difference this way:

> The differences between us, and the ways in which we deal with the question of difference, shape our identities. By "difference" (often called "otherness"), I mean the fact that we are not alike, that while humanity is marvelously diverse, we find it problematic, often threatening or even alienating, and we do not always live easily or well with it. […] Sometimes we fail to see those who are "other" as real persons.[255]

When we consider voice and the ways in which difference shapes writers' voices in light of Ackermann's statement, it becomes clear that our writing from a stance of individualism can lead us to an under-appreciation for the marvelous diversity of humanity, and to see others as threatening or alienating others. However, by practicing in relating to others in and through writing, we may be able to envision the "other" as a real person who might respond to our writing.

As I write now, I am aware not only of my immediate audience, the professors who will read and critique this dissertation, but also of all of the wider audience that includes students whom I have taught, some of whose voices are in this dissertation. The practice of including those voices and of wrestling with diversity in relation to theological education has the potential to help me relate better and more creatively to my

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[255] Ackermann, *After the Locusts*, 12-13.

current and future students and to the many people I encounter every day in my life and work as a lay minister. The students included in this dissertation, such as Ana Ibarra, are unlike me in many ways, as they are not privileged White Americans who were raised in an elite, English-speaking household. I have learned about who they are and what they are concerned about through reading and responding to their writing, helping them relate to other audiences, and writing about them here. The process of learning through writing, though, has allowed me to see how we share in the endeavor to construct voices and tell stories that will help others and benefit the greater good. Getting a good glimpse of us all together as a community--through this relational act of writing—has transformed me as a teacher, a theologian, and as a writer. The process of constructing a voice has the potential to transform not only the students, but also the teachers ourselves by reforming the way we think about students and education itself. This challenge to shift our worldview in terms of our pedagogy will be the focus of the final chapter.

Chapter Five

Helping Students Catch It: The Implementation of a Relational Writing Pedagogy for Constructing Voices in Theological Education

> My path to my dream [to read and write theology in English] began in fears but with the help of others I try to catch it.
>
> ~ W. Justin Ilboudo[256]

I. *A Relational Pedagogy: Shifting Our Focus from Product to People in Process*

Given the increased student diversity in enrollments in theological institutions that has already happened and is likely to continue happening, it is time for theological educators to respond to the 35% of our students who are not from the United States' dominant educational institutions, did not grow up speaking English as their first language, and/or are not from the mainstream White elite culture that has shaped our institutions. Making such changes means embracing our diverse students in such a way that their educational needs are addressed in our institutions; while students enroll to listen to and learn from us, we also must listen to and learn from them. One area in which we can learn a lot from them is in our approaches to teaching writing because writing is such a key part of the educational process in graduate study in the United States. Thus, the core argument of this dissertation is for a shift in our pedagogy of writing to better serve students like Chema Segura, Cathy Chalmers, Dawnn Brumfield, Justin Ilboudo, and Ana Ibarra, who enroll in our institutions not simply to learn content (although that is a large part of their goal) and a way of thinking about ideas, the world, themselves, others, and God, but also to prepare themselves as human beings called to undertake a wide range of vocations in churches, schools, other societal institutions, and, in some cases, academia.

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[256] W. Justin Ilboudo, personal email dated April 15, 2015.

To better assist our students, theological educators must expand our understanding of writing so that it is more than the product of an individual student's labor, meant only to demonstrate each student's absorption of and facility with content. Our writing pedagogy within theological education must include a wider range of possible methods and goals for student writing, ones that are grounded in a robust sense of writing as a social activity that is concerned with student writers' relationships to others, especially the audiences for whom they write. What this means for theological educators is that we must reconsider how we go about assisting students to become better critical thinkers and able communicators in and through their writing. We who teach in theological education must change our approach to writing, for the world we live in and our students are changing, and we must make this pedagogical shift by reframing our assumptions about our students, about theological writing, and about our roles teaching writing. We must think from a different perspective about what it means to help students learn.

Thinking from a different perspective about writing pedagogy means thinking with a student like Justin Ilboudo from Burkina Faso, who shares his difficult experience of learning to read and write in English so that he can be a better lawyer and priest in a way that highlights his need for assistance: "With the help of others I try to catch it." The "others" who are in a position to help Ilboudo and students like him for whom English and theology are a second or third or fourth language are us: theological educators teaching courses in biblical exegesis and interpretation, religious education, feminist and other liberation theologies, biomedical ethics, pastoral care and counseling, ecclesiology and church history, systematic theology, social justice, and so much more. In all of these

courses, we ask students to write, making assumptions about what it means to write and about the processes of writing, which have been largely shaped by our own educations and experiences of writing as academicians. Instead of expecting students to write just like us, it is time to recognize that helping them catch their dreams means helping them write like they need to write in order to live into those dreams.

Refusing to do this work to revise our writing pedagogies means that we are willing to go along with business-as-usual within the academy despite the changes in the gifts, talents, and needs brought into our classrooms by our students. Not listening to our students means that we are willing to allow people in every class to graduate who are not fully prepared to take on the vocational roles they are called to do in the complex and rapidly changing church, society, and schools beyond our institutions. Not listening to and learning from our students has the potential to cut off our institutions and the theological discourse from the wider world that needs them. It is imperative for the intellectual, spiritual, and relational health of our students, our theological schools, our churches, our societies, and ongoing theological conversation that we get on with the relational and ethical work we need to do.

The purpose of the previous four chapters of this project has been to point a way forward in this work of transforming how we teach theological writing for the purpose of assisting our diverse array of students so that they will be transformed for their vocations as ministers, educators, pastoral caregivers, and, in some cases, academic theologians. In summary, these chapters, organized as a practical theological project, have included the following main ideas: 1) a first chapter that describes the context of theological writing in the twenty-first century, 2) a second chapter that offers theoretical resources from

composition and Bakhtinian linguistics to meet students' writing needs and define the writer's voice within a social context, 3) a third chapter that proposes using intersectional theory to demonstrate a way of reading as writers to understand how a writer negotiates the power relations within her or his context to construct a voice, and 4) a fourth chapter that provides theological resources from African thinkers and ministers to frame our writing as an ethical and relational activity and our writers' voices as relational.

This fifth chapter of the dissertation offers an institutional process through which theological educators can learn from their own and students' experiences writing in order to change the way that writing is taught in theological education. This final chapter integrates the previous chapters in an attempt to discern a way forward as we theological educators learn from our diverse students about the teaching of writing. All writers, students and teachers alike, must engage in writing as a socio-rhetorical activity that unfolds as each writer works out her relationships between herself and her subject matter, audiences, and context to create a voice. When theological educators are attentive to this process in our own writing, and when we listen to what is happening to our students as they go through the writing process, we are better able to respond to the wide range of challenges faced by our students. This process will not only improve the results of student writing (their papers). It will also open up opportunities for them to grow and transform as human beings in relationship to other human beings, and it will help us transform learning through writing within theological education.

By focusing on the construction of the writer's voice, theological educators will be better able to guide students toward greater learning in and through writing and prepare them for vocations beyond the academy. Because a writer's voice is the textual

expression of the writer's negotiation, through generative struggle, of her relationships with herself, her audience, her context, and her subject matter, there are some specific ways that theological educators can assist each student in constructing her voice. This chapter offers a shared process influenced by Ubuntu insights for transforming our pedagogy of theological writing following a vision based on the relational theology proposed in the previous chapter. This process includes a reference to five pedagogical understandings for assisting diverse students in the construction of voice, which were shared in Chapter One. The process also offers sample writing practices that educators can use in seminaries, divinity schools, and schools of theology and ministry with our students in the pursuit of this goal. In this last chapter, the needs of international students, non-native speakers/writers of English, and other non-traditional students are in the forefront of the conversation although the principles and practices articulated here are useful for all students—as well as teachers, too. This chapter asserts that there is great potential for theological writing to transform not only students' voices and professors' pedagogies, but also the entire academic study of theology and ministry—and, in fact, the world.

II. ***A Shared Process for Educators: Transforming the Teaching of Writing***

In order to transform the teaching of writing within theological education so that it privileges the construction of students' writing voices, educators must undertake a process together that involves several stages and includes students in some stages. This process is modeled after the basic pattern of practical theology, which first investigates the situation or problem, then develops resources for responding to it, next develops a

plan of action, then carries out that plan, and, finally, invites feedback in order to evaluate and change the plan as it progresses.

A. *Develop an Awareness of the Problem*

First, educators must become more aware of what is happening and not happening with student writers. This dissertation has attempted to point toward a method of going about doing that: gathering empirical data to understand more fully who is enrolled in our institutions, talking with students about their experiences in writing, and learning what has and has not happened in theological education regarding writing. Further study using composition theory and linguistic tools of investigation needs to be done to learn more about student writing; specifically, analysis of student writing at various stages of their educations and beyond could give us a sense of how they progress in their writing and how they use it after graduation. Special attention to their understanding of audience, as it emerges in and through their writing voices, is especially important in this process of investigation. Important to this process is a way of learning from students that involves deep listening and an iterative approach to gathering ideas and insights from them that continually returns to them for clarification and elaboration. Additionally, a survey of current pedagogical practices across a single school or several institutions could also bolster educators' knowledge of what is and is not happening in classrooms regarding writing. Finally, the Association of Theological Schools could also undertake a much larger empirical survey to find out about students' educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds so that educators would have more detail about where our students are coming from.

The first goal at this stage is to learn as much as possible from students by hearing their voices as they speak about writing. Theological educators can augment this by investigating what other researchers have learned through quantitative empirical research studies that help us know about the diversity of student writing. Gathering more data and sharing it with other educators to create a more robust picture of writing in theological education within specific institutions or across institutions is a necessary first step in the transformation of theological education in and through writing. Learning more about who our students are, how they write, and how we are currently teaching writing is one way to begin this shared process.

B. *Preliminary Faculty Conversations & Investigation of Resources*

Once theological educators have investigated the situation in theological writing in their institutions, the next step would be to gather together to share and critically analyze information and discuss possibilities for change at their particular schools. This is an analytical and brain-storming stage that would invite faculty to work together to take stock of the strengths and limits of the writing pedagogies already offered and to look at those in relation to students' needs. The faculty would need to ask themselves questions about the degree to which they are willing to change their individual pedagogies and the overall pedagogical approach to writing in their institution, a move that could result in curricular change and shifts in requirements for degree programs. This process invites faculty to think not only about writing in their academic disciplines, which is the way that most of them think about writing, but also about writing in other disciplines and across the whole curriculum. Together, faculty can look for the ways in which these various

disciplinary and generic approaches can work together in an integrative rather than an atomistic fashion. They can also explore theological, linguistic, and pedagogical resources for addressing writing within their institutions.

Tools that faculty could use in starting this conversation could include those provided by the Writing Across the Curriculum movement in composition, which has been pioneered by Toby Fulwiler, James Kinneavy, Susan McLeod, and others.[257] For my M.Div. senior thesis at Vanderbilt Divinity School, I wrote about using Writing Across the Curriculum as a way of bringing together faculty from different disciplines to examine the curriculum and pedagogical approaches to writing that might have a wider effect on revising theological education more broadly to reflect the needs of students in the twenty-first century to learn well, to write well, and to prepare adequately for their futures as ministers, educators, pastoral caregivers, etc. Working together in this way enacts a relational process that encourages cooperation across various disciplinary and other divisions within the faculty and models the kind of relational theological goal of unity in diversity that Chapter Four proposed through Ubuntu theology. This process is not intended to create a single writing pedagogy or curricular strategy for an institution; rather, it is a way of coming together as a faculty to gain a sense of the shared landscape and to think together about how to improve writing pedagogy for our students' benefit.

C. *Develop a Vision & a Strategy for Change*

Once faculty have had an initial conversation in which we share information about writing in their schools and discuss both the possibilities for change and the limits

[257] See the Bibilography for some examples of composition theorists' articles and books on Writing Across the Curriculum.

at their respective institutions, the next step is to develop a shared vision for the future and design a pathway to get there. Faculty must have a common vision of what we want in and through student writing, even as we remain committed to the writing demands of our various disciplines. The lack of a common goal due to the siloing of writing into disciplines is part of the problem with student writing, which has not been discussed in this dissertation. Part of what students need from their writing practice is integration of ideas across disciplines (church history, ethics, and systematic theology, for example) as they contemplate working in ways that are integrative. The practice of setting a common goal or set of goals for student writing across the curriculum, rather than focusing solely on a pedagogical goal for one class, is essential for driving toward integration for student writers. This common goal would be different for every institution, as it would be shaped by the institution's context as well as its constituents and would have to take into account the history and the greater mission and vision of the school.

In terms of specific strategies, faculty must develop a plan for introducing such a curricular and pedagogical overhaul. We might develop a pattern of writing assignments across each degree program so that students will have intentional exposure to writing a variety of genres and for a range of audiences as they progress through an M.Div., an M.A., an S.T.L., or another degree. Theological educators might choose to change reading assignments across the curriculum so that they reflect greater diversity of theological and cultural perspectives and connect to writing assignments differently. We might offer new or change existing academic support programs, such as writing centers or ongoing extra-curricular writing workshops for students, to help students achieve both their academic and vocational goals. Faculty might work closely with our theological

library to develop rigorous research and citation programs to augment the guidance they are giving students in writing longer papers for their courses. Theological educators might require more group writing projects of students or other shared writing processes to encourage students to see writing as a social process. We will also need to consider how to interface with the larger university (if the theological school is part of one), with church denominations, and with the public around the change in their curriculum, not simply as a matter of good public relations, but also to develop a better sense of how our pedagogical plan contributes to the mission of the university, the church, and the good of society.

D. *Cultivate Faculty Thinking & Skills in Teaching Writing*

Many faculty have not thought about how we learned to write since we first mastered the art of academic writing, so one step in the process of promoting institutional transformation must be to provide educators with new ways of thinking about and practicing the teaching of writing. This can be achieved by offering workshops that invite faculty members to consider our own writing practices and our approaches to teaching writing. I have offered such workshops for graduate faculty in psychology and education and have invited them to discuss how they talk to students about writing, their methods of analyzing student writing, and their approaches to giving feedback; these workshops have generated robust conversations and changes in some professors' ways of incorporating writing into their classrooms. Bringing in a consultant from the outside to lead these kinds of workshops can offer faculty a fresh and unexpected approach to writing pedagogies and can help us develop tools to use in our classrooms. These conversations

can also connect with the larger issues of teaching writing within graduate education and generate other issues for faculty to consider as we contemplate a vision for writing in our institutions and determine strategies for implementing the goal.

E. *Implementation in Classrooms & Within the Larger Curriculum: The Writer's Voice*

Once a goal has been set and strategies for moving forward have been developed, the faculty must then implement these within the curriculum and in our classrooms. Although suggestions for some changes are offered above, I want to take this opportunity to share specific examples of workshops that faculty could adapt for use in the classroom to encourage students' development of their writer's voices. These workshops help us shift our focus from teaching students writing to teaching student writers. Instead of looking for a good demonstration of learning in a paper, which is the product of student writing, we must concentrate instead on developing good writers. To do so, we must start with assisting them to develop good relationships with themselves, their audiences, the context in which they write, and the subject matter. To do so, we must help them focus on the process of writing. This means that we have to teach writing differently and that we must think about writing differently as well.

Chapter One offered five basic understandings of student writing challenges that educators must consider as we learn to think and practice differently about theological writing so that we can turn our attention and the attention of our students to the relational writing process that advocated here. These understandings include: 1) developing an understanding of writing as an enculturation process, 2) helping students to grapple with the dominant academic style of writing, 3) working toward supportive and respectful

relationships between students and professors, 4) understanding shifts in theological subject matter when students from diverse backgrounds write, and 5) leading students toward becoming more contextually aware. These five understandings are intricately connected by a single vision that underlies all of them. This is a vision of theological education as a robustly relational and ongoing process that continually aims towards the ethical transformation of people in community as they each seek to live into their vocational callings. Wherever students come from educationally, culturally, and linguistically, they will be transformed by theological education, and the goal of this dissertation is to offer ways that theological educators can assist these students to learn and grow in and through writing. Chapter Four offered an ethical framework of mutuality, generosity, and openness to prevail as we move in and through the work to make such a change in pedagogies for theological writing.

All five of the understandings presented in Chapter One are focused on supporting students as they write, not on getting them to produce a perfect final product (although students who write with a greater awareness of their relationships to all aspects of the writing process typically turn in better writing as a result of these efforts). In order to promote this process-oriented approach, these sample classroom writing practices are presented and can be used individually or in sequence with students or adapted as free-standing workshops for use outside of the classroom. The purpose of providing such specific examples is not to provide a definitive list of possible writing assignments or exercises. Rather, it is to whet theological educators' imaginations about how we might begin to shift our classroom practices to teach writing as a relational activity requiring a process through sensitivity to voice.

1. *An Introduction to the Socio-Rhetorical Complexity of Writing: Analysis of "Mystery Texts" Using the Rhetorical Triangle*

Early in the semester, I introduce the Rhetorical Triangle to student writers, whether I am working in a classroom or individually with a student. I talk with them about writing as a social activity that is not done in isolation, something covered in Chapter Two of this dissertation. I make sure to invite students to consider their work to be part of an ongoing theological conversation that started with the earliest Christians and will continue well beyond our lifetimes; we discuss as a group what this might mean. We discuss how it might change our approach to writing to think of it as a process of entering into dialogue with the communion of saints on whose theological shoulders they stand. We also discuss the ways that their writing creates learning for the students themselves and other people, so they begin to think about how their voices can eventually resonate beyond the page. This conversation helps them envision their writing as mattering to others rather than being merely for a grade.

Next, we focus on understanding this social dimension of writing by pointing out the insights provided by rhetoric. I explain the Rhetorical Triangle to students, defining each component of the triangle (writer, audience(s), subject matter, context, text, and voice), which were also defined in Chapter Two of this dissertation. We discuss the relationships between all the different parts of this rhetorical triangle, concentrating especially on how the writer is always in relationship to her reader, even when she is writing alone. We imagine together how the relationships in the Rhetorical Triangle can shift over time and with each different writing assignment; the developments in these relationships can lead, for example, to students' greater familiarity with subject matter than their readers by the time they are writing a doctoral dissertation. I encourage

students to make this triangle their own, to use it if it helps them, or to change the shape of it or the terms on it if they need to. It is a malleable tool for helping them to think critically about their own writing and that of others.

Third, we turn to a group reading exercise that supports the kind of analytical writing students need to do. Together, the class examines a short piece of theological writing with the title and author's name missing. This is a practice in doing a rhetorical analysis of what I call a "Mystery Text." I invite a student or students to read the page or so aloud for the class, and then I ask students to draw the Rhetorical Triangle on a page and, under each heading, to list features from the text that give them information about who might have written this piece of writing (writer), when it was written (context), what kind of writing it is (text), who the intended audience might have been (audience), and what the main idea or thesis is (subject matter). After students have had time to make some notes, we then discuss this as a class as I annotate a Rhetorical Triangle on the board in front of the class with each student's comments. This is a robust and lively conversation that generates a lot of participation from students as they work out together how another writer has created a voice in and through the rhetorical relationships in her or his text.

Texts I have used for this part of the Mystery Text exercise include the two-paragraph Preface to Teresa of Avila's autobiography and a short section from Augustine's *Confessions*, but just about any theological text that contains clues about the rhetorical situation in which it was written can be effective. The process is fun for students and usually engenders excitement and engagement in the classroom. It is both an exercise in critical theological reading as well as in thinking about theological writing.

We are working together to read a piece of theological writing with the eyes and ears of writers instead of the eyes and ears of readers. As a class, we cooperate in order to create a picture of who the writer might be and what she or he is trying to do in relationship to ideas and her/his audience. We discern together what the mystery writer's voice sounds like and try also to determine her or his identity. Most of the time, students figure this out quickly, and they enjoy succeeding. Even when they know almost immediately, I always ask them how they know the writer's identity. What does the writer say that leads them to be so sure that they are reading a piece by Teresa or Augustine? We fill in the missing pieces on the Rhetorical Triangle until everyone has a fairly complete picture of this Mystery Text's writer and her or his voice.

In terms of voice more specifically, I guide students to explore the writer's construction of her/his voice based on the context in which s/he was writing. I do so using some basic ideas from rhetorical theory and intersectional theory. For example, in the case of a piece of writing like that of Teresa's, the students and I look at certain features of her writing—just as Chapter Two examined the writing of Valerie Saiving and The Mud Flower Collective and Chapter Three examined Desmond Tutu's writing—to think together about how Teresa conveyed a voice in a situation that was very dangerous for her as a woman. Teresa's voice was constructed in a time when being a woman leader was considered subversive and being on the wrong side of some church leaders could get a person killed. Teresa's voice reflects her effort to walk the tightrope between leadership and punishment. To go the wrong way within the matrix of domination and oppression during the sixteenth century could lead to death. Yet Teresa articulated a narrative about her own unfolding spiritual path as a woman called to lead communities of faith in a

voice that remains audible today. Her constructive process can be tracked through her careful wording and sentences and her strong imagery, and it is a fine legacy for theological writers today, all of whom must negotiate the matrix of domination and oppression in different ways, depending on where and how we interact with that matrix. Creating a writer's voice is one way to interact with that matrix intentionally, and thinking about rhetorical matters when writing can help students do this.

After the class has shared this intense reading process, I invite them to take home a writing assignment based on this same analytic idea. I give them a piece by another Mystery Writer, often using Tutu's Preface to *Made for Goodness* because so many of them from around the world will have heard of him. I invite students to analyze this Mystery Text on their own and submit a short paper that communicates their findings. To prepare them, I give them a basic three-part outline of a typical academic paper to follow, which includes an Introduction, Body, and Conclusion, and then we discuss the ways that they can use the Rhetorical Triangle not only for their analysis of the Mystery Text, but also to organize themselves as writers. I ask them to imagine that we have found this Mystery Text together so that I, as their reader, am as mystified as they are about the Mystery Text. Their job is to determine the missing pieces of the puzzle and to teach those to me as their reader. I also ask them to communicate in the Conclusion whether they agree with the main idea that the Mystery Writer is conveying in his or her text.

This process gives students experience in thinking about the socio-rhetorical dimensions of other writers' works and in applying these ideas in class with their colleagues and me as well as in doing so on their own. It also provides an opening for helping them think about themselves as writers, as people who can contribute to the

community of learning. They are part of the process of Christian knowing, not simply vessels to be filled with their teachers' knowledge. This reading and writing exercise lets them add to the conversation in a more self-aware manner. When I grade the writing that they do about the Mystery Text, my focus is not on whether or not they got it "right" (meaning, that they figured out who the writer is), but whether they analyzed the Mystery Text deeply and used their own socio-rhetorical situation to convey what they learned to their reader. I also give them individual feedback on what I hear as the voice they have constructed in the paper.

When I return the students' papers on the Mystery Text, we talk as a group about how the project unfolded for them as a process. I ask them how it felt to figure out who the writer is or, if someone did not figure it out, I ask what it was like to be in the dark and what strategies they used for writing even when they did not know the "answer." We discuss as a class whether they found the Rhetorical Triangle useful in reading and/or in writing, and I ask them to explain how they employed it in this project and whether they plan to use it for assignments in other classes. Generally, students adapt the Rhetorical Triangle for reading in other classes, and they show me how they've drawn it on a piece of paper while reading other texts by very challenging theological writers. I often refer to the Rhetorical Triangle when giving other writing assignments as well and bring it up in various other ways throughout the semester so that its use can become second nature to them. I invite them to use it to construct their voices for other assignments in our course or for assignments in courses across the curriculum.

This process of introducing the Rhetorical Triangle and practicing a variety of ways to put it to use in and out of class enacts all five of the understandings that were

outlined in Chapter One. First, it is important for students who need help with the enculturation process in North American theological education. Those who come from educational settings where memorization and repetition were the primary modes of mastery need assistance in learning to engage differently with texts and to write with a more complex understanding of their own voices in relationship to their reader(s), and this process does just that. Second, teaching the Rhetorical Triangle introduces students from diverse backgrounds to the dominant academic style in theological education in the United States because it helps them learn organizational and critical skills and to put them to work in their reading and writing. Third, it helps them develop a conscious relationship with their professor because they have to work with me (and their classmates) to discover the first Mystery Text and to de-brief after writing about the second; additionally, they must think about me as their reader and determine what I need to know (or not) as they unravel the mystery for me.

Fourth, the exercise actually helps me, as a theological educator, understand students' perspectives as theological writers based on the contexts from which they come. For example, those who are from some parts of Asia like Vietnam and Korea often do not know who Desmond Tutu is and can be frustrated by the take-home portion of the assignment because they do not have a cultural background that has taught them about him, about apartheid in South Africa, or about the Nobel Peace Prize. Recognizing that they do not have the same awareness as Africans and Western students is helpful, as it helps me form a picture of what they might and might not know as they arrive to study theology in the United States. This, of course, can lead to a greater understanding on my

part of why they go about reading certain kinds of theology or focusing on certain disciplines rather than others. It is a good education for the theological educator herself!

Finally, the Mystery Text assignment allows all of us—students and teachers alike—to become more contextually aware. As I just suggested, I become more contextually aware as I listen to and read what students interpret in the Mystery Texts that I give them. But they also become more aware of their own socio-rhetorical contexts at home, of the context of North American higher education, of Western theological understanding, and so forth. Knowing that there are different contexts operating in a student's mind can help her determine how to construct her voice in theological writing in such a way that it speaks to her audience but also satisfies her as a writer. Ultimately, this exercise is not a stopping point for this kind of learning about voice, but it is a good beginning and a helpful reminder along the journey of learning to write in theological education.

2. *Group Projects: Practicing Writing as Social Activity*

One of the most effective ways I have developed to assist students in understanding their writing as a social activity is to make it social: in other words, to assign a group project that involves writing. In the past, I asked them to write a paper together to submit for a shared grade, a process that included significant work in the classroom and on their own in groups. More recently, I changed this assignment into one that required small groups to teach one of the chapters we read for the course. Ideally, there are three members in each group—three is just enough to give them a diversity of voices to grapple with, but it is not too many to handle for practical reasons. The

assignment is for students to take a piece of writing, such as George Orwell's famous article "Politics and the English Language" (1946) or "Theological Integrity," a chapter from Rowan Williams' book *On Christian Theology* (2000), and work together to understand the piece, to decide how best to teach it in the class, to plan a presentation that allows each student to present and that engages the entire class, to develop a handout and visual presentation such as a set of Powerpoint slides to accompany their class presentation, and to be prepared for a Question and Answer session at the end of their presentations. At the end of the process, I ask each student to write a self-evaluation and an evaluation of how their group worked together.

I save the most challenging readings of the semester for these group projects so that students will have to work hard together to read and understand their article. They have opportunities to work together in class, and I walk around and visit with each group, asking and answering questions about their article and listening to their conversation. I ask them to turn their written handouts and Powerpoint slides in to me before their presentations so that I can offer them feedback. They work outside of class as well, with some groups meeting to discuss and plan over coffee or lunch off campus. The results are not always brilliant presentations—the students do struggle to share what they are learning from their articles with the class not only because of the difficulty of the articles, but also because of their own linguistic limitations. However, the students often come up with imaginative ways of conveying what they are teaching with some groups showing film clips and inviting the class to discuss the clips in relation to the topic or other groups developing a case study for students to use to think together about the topic. They produce handouts that are a resource for classmates. Additionally, the class discussions

during the Question and Answer sessions demonstrate that their presentations generate the interest of and attention from other students. Overall, the process is excellent because the students—presenters and audience—are fully engaged with each other as well as the content we are discussing.

It is worth highlighting that the students are sorted into groups based on their interests: I give them a list of the articles, let them take a week to review the articles, and then ask them to turn in a ranking sheet on which they list their preferences. I try to give every student her or his first choice, but I tell them that I will be sure to give everyone their first or second choice; somehow, this process always works out. What is fascinating about dividing into groups is that students who sit together or are from the same nations or linguistic groups typically do not choose the same articles, which means that the class mixes up quite a bit. Recently, I've had groups like the one that included a Malaysian lay woman, a Vietnamese priest, and another priest from Dominica in the West Indies, none of whom shared a similar educational, linguistic, or cultural background. Another group in a past class was comprised of a lay woman from the United States, a diocesan priest from Nigeria, and a Jesuit priest from the Rwanda. The diversity of these students' backgrounds and current positions in their churches within the societies in which they live and work is stunning, and the distance between them is very great at the start of the semester. However, the project itself offers not only opportunities for students to learn about how great thinkers and writers think about their writing, but also about how to work with others who are different than they are. What the students say in their evaluations at the end of this process is that they were worried about working with people whom they did not know and had nothing in common with, but that now they have

friends and colleagues from around the world whom they can rely on to help them with difficult readings and with feedback on their writing for classes in the future.

This group project helps students gain an appreciation for others' processes of enculturation as well as their own. It helps them grapple together with the expectations of writing, reading, and presenting in academia in the United States, giving them opportunities for meaningful conversations about these expectations away from the classroom. The project also helps them develop excellent and supportive relationships with each other and decenters me as the teacher of the class (even though I retain the right to add to or reframe comments when they share a misunderstanding with their peers), creating a different set of relationships in the classroom. It gives them opportunities to make sense of the content of the articles from their own contexts—for example, George Orwell's admonitions regarding political speech that obfuscates its real purposes sounds different to a person from an authoritarian nation where speech is limited than it does to one who hails from a democratic state where free speech is protected. And, finally, this project gives students opportunities to become more aware not only of the academic context in which they learn and of their own context for ministry, but also of the contexts of others, which invariably shape their peers' readings, writing, and presentations in different ways. I strongly recommend that theological educators adapt this project for their own uses because it is so remarkable at achieving the central goal of helping students work through a writing process (which, in this case, results in a class presentation as well as written materials) that is clearly social in every aspect. Any course that utilizes this approach to teaching and learning will enrich the relational and communicative experiences of the students in that course.

3. *Diverging Expectations: An In-Class Workshop on Students' Voices in Writing*

To assist students more directly in the construction of their voices, theological educators must guide them toward a greater awareness of their voice or voices as writers. I offer another in-class workshop on voice to my students with the purpose of inviting them to consider their relationships with their potential audiences by giving them a way to share the unspoken expectations and purposes that these audiences have for their writing. The process helps them think through what others expect of their writing and how those expectations may differ from audience to audience and how they may shape the students' purposes in writing. It can also lead students toward making choices about the construction of their voices in relation to a particular audience or to all of them in a particular writing assignment.

The workshop begins with an invitation to students to write answers to five questions on a piece of paper or their laptop computers. The expectation is that the writing itself will not be read aloud in the class, but the ideas generated will be spoken aloud in pairs and/or with the whole group. I ask these questions in succession, writing them on the board as I speak them aloud. I do not give them all of the questions at once. This is what I ask, in the order in which I ask:

1. *What does the academy (university) want from my writing?*
2. *What does society want from my writing?*
3. *What does the church want from my writing?*
4. *What do I want from my writing?*
5. *What does God want from my writing?*

I give students a couple of minutes per question to jot down their answers. Then, after finishing the writing component, I invite them to share their answers with the person sitting next to them. I also ask them to note where their own answers are similar and

where they are different—and the ways in which there are similarities and differences in their answers and their partners'. We spend about five to ten minutes working in pairs.

After they have compared notes in pairs, I open the conversation up to the whole class, inviting them to share what they noticed and writing their comments on the board for all to see. I ask them to begin with whatever they feel stands out from them in their own answers and/or in comparison with their partners' answers. Typically, we cover a wide range of issues, including a few of the following:[258] 1) The varied expectations of their writing by the academy and the church are typically divergent because they have a sense that the church and the academy do not want the same thing: for example, students in my recent class stated that the academy wants "originality" while the church wants "conformity" and for writing "to support teachings of authority,"[259] expectations that are not easily carried off together in one piece of writing. 2) Sometimes, although not in the Spring 2015 semester, students have little to say about what they expect of their own writing because they have never thought about having expectations for themselves; this is particularly true for young students and students from more authoritarian educational settings. 3) Students who are ordained or are in religious life (priests, monks, and nuns, for example) often do not distinguish between what they expect of their writing and what the church and God expect because they have fused these purposes in their minds and in practice due to their religious training. 4) For many students, though not all, God's expectations of their writing is much more generous and humane than any other set of expectations: they see that God wants them to grow more loving through their writing, while the academy might expect them to write according to the standard. While these are

[258] See Appendix G for a list of responses from students in my most recent theological research and writing course in the Spring of 2015.
[259] See Appendix G.

not all of the revelations that students share, they offer a sense of the rich conversation that unfolds as a result of the writing exercise.

What emerges in this process is that each student has her own constellation of purposes and expectations for her writing, and these are derived not in isolation but from their previous educational experiences, their communities of faith, their families, and in other social contexts. No two sets of expectations are alike. At the same time, most students have never considered these questions and doing so enlivens them in unexpected ways. We discuss how these expectations help their writing by giving them a focus and energy to continue despite challenges. We discuss how these expectations can hinder them in their writing, particularly when they are divergent. We talk about how these expectations reveal certain purposes in writing, such as getting good grades in order to be accepted into a doctoral program, writing a paper of which their bishop would approve, etc. We consider how they might have answered the questions differently if I had asked them in another order—if I had asked about God first rather than the academy.

We also talk about the implications of their answers for constructing their voices in theological education. We wonder together, for example, what it means to expect one thing of yourself and to believe that your church or faith community expects something else; this sometimes includes a reference back to Teresa of Avila's Preface, which we read and discussed in the Rhetorical Triangle workshop earlier in the semester. We talk about how that discrepancy might shape the way a student shares ideas in a paper. While the workshop cannot cover all the ground in helping students construct their voices, it gives them practice using another set of tools for doing so. They typically feel empowered by the process, as if they had just received a revelation about themselves and

their writing. Really, what they have done is to reveal to themselves something about their own unexamined assumptions about writing and the construction of a writer's voice amidst a confusing context or set of contexts.

This process of self-reflexive, audience-centered discernment about expectations for writing can be done not only in a single class, but also at various points in a semester or at times throughout a student's academic career. I recommend to all students that they ask themselves these questions when they begin every new paper, and I invite them to re-examine them on their own at various points in their writing careers, whether in school or not. I emphasize that it is good for each student to think about the ways in which her answers have changed over time or in relation to a particular piece of writing—and to note if they have not changed at all. The answers they give tell them something about the voices that they are trying to construct at any given time, whether those are pastoral, prophetic, academic, or something else altogether.

As with the previous exercise, this workshop can give students and the professor information about their enculturation process and their engagement with the dominant academic style in North America. Particularly when there is a gap between what the student expects of her writing and what she thinks the academy expects of her writing, these two concerns can come to the fore. Additionally, when the expectations that she imagines the church has for her become clear, she can also envision why her voice may sound bold in some ways and fearful in others. The process of doing this exercise also reveals what students think their professors want when they excavate the expectations that the academy has of their writing; the conversation around this issue can allow professors to shift the relationship that they have with students as they let students know

what their actual expectations are rather than imagined ones. As with the previous exercise, this one sheds light on the potential for students to see things differently, which informs their interests in theology. And, finally, these questions allow students and the professor to develop a more robust sense of context and the difference between contexts.

This voice workshop is a meta-linguistic activity that leads students to reflect on the ways that their writing voices are shaped by unvoiced expectations and purposes. It helps them see how their writing is rooted in their relationships to the various audiences and contexts lurking in their imaginations. While it is not the only writing workshop that can uncover some of these relational issues in students' writing processes, it is generally successful in opening up a conversation with the class and encourages students to reflect on their own about voice. It can be adapted for use with particular content areas, such as biblical studies, in which students could think about these expectations for their writing in relationship to the Bible, which is a source of authority for Christians and can be rather challenging for some students to write about. In ecclesiology, it could be used to help students think through what they understand the church to be asking of them and to dig into the assumptions underneath those expectations, as one of my students did in the Spring of 2015 when she said there are two churches that she is writing for: one that expects her to "support teachings of authority" and the other that includes "the people (who don't want to read)" because they simply want to be told what to do.[260] Students' expectations for their writing are complicated and come from their relationships with individuals, themselves, institutions, and the societies they come from; this exercise is an opportunity to help them get underneath those expectations to find out what is informing them. In this way, the exercise offers a chance for students to think hermeneutically in a

[260] See Appendix G.

group setting, an excellent critical thinking still for them to develop as they construct their writer's voices.

F. *Create a Feedback Loop & Ongoing Evaluative Process for Transforming Pedagogy*

After developing an awareness of students' challenges in writing, developing a vision and strategy for pedagogical change, cultivating faculty thinking and skills in teaching writing, and implementing voice- and relationally-oriented writing workshops within classroom settings and elsewhere in the curriculum, theological educators must now evaluate our efforts. Not only at the end of the process of change, but also throughout it, faculty must create some kind of feedback loop that enables us to learn what is working and what is not so that we can evaluate our process and goals. Because the goal of changing pedagogy within a classroom and a curriculum across disciplines and degrees is oriented toward student success in their studies and in their work beyond the academy, it is crucial to collect responses from them as well as faculty. I recommend including current students at various levels of study in helping faculty not only understand the challenges of writing, but also in developing pedagogical and curricular approaches that might better assist students and in evaluating the changes themselves. Additionally, I advocate that the evaluation of the process would be stronger if graduates of each institution were consulted for their feedback on the writing instruction they received in theological education. These graduates, who are mostly working outside of the academy, can let their faculty know how the writing they did in graduate school shaped their writing for their work in ministry. Alumni/ae at various stages of their

professional development outside of academics may have different opinions about the efficacy of academic writing in their work, so a range of graduates should be consulted.

There are various modes for encouraging student and alumni/ae feedback, but the strongest for the purpose of evaluating writing are oriented around a recursive process that allows for ongoing conversation between educators, students, and alumni/ae. This is a process that does not end if educators are truly willing to listen to students and the world as they develop their writing pedagogies for theological education. While the process itself is non-linear, once educators arrive at a point when evaluation is possible, it is important to remember that they will return to the beginning and start anew, reconstituting the educational world they have created.

III. *A Relational Pedagogy: From Writing Products to Writers-in-Process*

> Writing is not only about mechanisms to apply in order to get a result. There is something more in the decision to write because it connects the writer with many worlds, that is to say, audiences of the past, of the present, and of the future. Writing is all about hope.
>
> ~ W. Justin Ilboudo [261]

This chapter and the dissertation as a whole are a proposal to change how we teach theological writing so that all student writers can recognize and develop the ability to do what Justin Ilboudo describes: connect with the audiences of the past, the present, and the future. This project insists that the best writing pedagogy for the diverse students in theological education is a pedagogy that operates as a two-way street in which students learn from theological educators and *vice versa*. It is a pedagogy that focuses on helping student writers learn how to direct their own writing processes so that they not only

[261] W. Justin Ilboudo, self-evaluation sent via email dated December 15, 2014. Used with permission.

practice critical thinking skills and acquire new understandings of theological ideas, but also gain the ability to relate meaningfully to others in their work beyond their studies. Through understanding writing differently and attending to the construction of voices in the social process of writing, all theological learners, teachers as well as students, can be transformed.

The vision of reform proposed here is grounded in a primary assumption about learning, the life of faith, and pedagogy—that of the crucial importance of community. I share with Ubuntu theologians the vision that *A person is a person because of other persons* because it is an antidote to individualistic approaches to teaching and writing and living that do not support student learning and growth toward being good ministers, generous and open educators, thoughtful activists, and healthy pastoral caregivers. A change toward seeing our world as shared is part of developing a greater relational sense that is needed by all of us. We need to develop relationally not only because students from diverse backgrounds struggle with writing, but also because theological education and theological writing must become more connected to the communities that our graduates serve, whether those are sacred or secular in nature. The world, not just theological education and our students, needs to be guided toward greater mutual relationships if we are to survive and thrive together on the planet.

In terms of theological education, transforming the teaching of writing in classrooms and across the curriculum means shifting from the sole focus on academic utility, in which writing is treated as a content-oriented product, to an approach that foregrounds writing as a part of the process of learning and as a pathway that can help students become the kind of leaders that the world needs them to be and that they

envision for themselves. The chapters of this dissertation have introduced a new way of thinking about and practicing teaching writing with the hope that theological educators will take up the challenge of promoting students' awareness of the ethical choices they must make as they create their voices in an effort to communicate with other people in a shared world. Students' voices emerge as they learn to relate to themselves as writers, to the world of ideas, to their readers, to the contexts in which they live and work, and to the God of their understanding. The intentional construction of a voice unites the head, the heart, and the hands in the effort to allow students' own narratives to seep through their written work in conscious ways. The process of constructing voices helps them create mutual and respectful relationships in and through the writing itself so that they might learn and grow.

Our work as theological educators must be to learn about who our diverse students really are and to develop better responses to their educational and vocational needs and goals. This process is important not only for making the academy a better place, but also for making the church and human society a better place. The ways in which we go about doing our work—whether in isolation or in collaboration—help to create a particular kind of world by enacting it within our own spheres of influence and participation. If we do not examine and transform the process by which we create a world in and through our teaching, we allow the *status quo* to govern us, and it is a *status quo* that persists in violence, division, and dehumanization on many levels inside and outside of the academy. Our global twenty-first century society is both incredibly interconnected by technology and transportation and communications systems, yet we remain deeply divided by ideologies, power structures that benefit from division, and old patterns of

discrimination based on our differences in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, and religion. I am interested in enacting world in which students understand words and ideas, languages and voices to be part of living together in community. I am also interested in how ideas, words, languages, and voices can both shape our lives of faith and be shaped by them in ways that highlight mutuality, generosity, and openness.

Theological education must lead the way toward human unity in our diversity by creating more robust, respectful, and creative connections between people. Teaching students to better communicate their voices in and through writing is one way to achieve this ethical and relational vision. Together, theological educators and our students can work together to enact a hopeful future by writing in and through relationships of mutuality and openness and a willingness on the part of every person to learn from others, especially those who are different from us.

Appendix

Appendix A

TABLE 1
Head Count Enrollment by Race or Ethnic Group, All Degrees & Genders, 1970-2013
All ATS Schools in USA and Canada[262]

Race/Ethnic Group[263]	1970	1972	1978	1980	2006	2013
Asian[264]	Unavailable[265]	Unavailable	499 (1.1%)	602 (1.2%)	5,370 (6.6%)	5,756 (8%)
Black[266]	808 (2.6% of total)	1,061 (3.2%)	1,919 (4.1%)	2,205 (4.4%)	8,344 (10.3%)	9,325 (12.9%)
Hispanic[267]	Unavailable	264 (.8%)	681 (1.5%)	894 (1.8%)	3,104 (3.8%)	3,789 (5.2%)
Native American[268]	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	64 (.1%)	312 (.4%)	288 (.4%)
White[269]	30,264[270] (97.4%)	31,711 (96%)	41,854 (90.1%)	44,298 (89.4%)	48,236 (59.5%)	39,713 (54.9%)
Visa/International/Non-Resident[271]	Unavailable	Unavailable	1,507 (3.2%)	1,548 (3.1%)	6,104 (7.5%)	6,319 (8.7%)
Not Reported[272]	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	9,593 (11.9%)	7,188 (9.9%)
Total	31,072	33,036	46,460	49,611	81,063	72,387
# Schools Reporting[273]	179	189	193	197	253	267

[262] See the Overview of Data Sources and the Bibliography for detailed information about the sources of each data set used in the creation of this table.
[263] The labels used in this table to indicate race/ethnicity are those employed by the ATS in their fact books and data tables.
[264] In the 1980-81 Fact Book, the ATS used the label "Pacific/Asian American" but later switched to "Asian." In the 1980-81 book, the researchers defined "Pacific/Asian American" as "persons from Asian and Pacific Island ancestry, whether born abroad or in the U.S.A. and its trust territories in the Pacific Ocean" (17).
[265] Any category labeled "Unavailable" means that there were no data available in these categories in the year sampled. These changes in the table demonstrate the ATS's shifts in recognition of the diversity of students present in theological education.
[266] In no ATS fact book or data table is there a definition of "Black."
[267] "Hispanic" is not defined in the ATS materials.
[268] In the 1980-1981 fact book, the ATS defines Native American as "North American Indian or Eskimo, native to either the U.S. or Canada" (24).
[269] "White" is never defined in the ATS materials.
[270] In some reporting years, the ATS provides a number of White students in its tables. Other years, the number of White students is derived by subtracting student numbers from other groups from the total.
[271] In the 1978-1979 fact book, this group is denoted as "Nonresidents of U.S. or Canada." Elsewhere, the group is referred to as "Visa."
[272] Non-reported students are those who are not listed under any racial/ethnic group label.
[273] See note on changes in memberships of theological institutions in the ATS under the section, ATS Membership Changes.

Overview of Data Sources

The data from this table are taken from the Association of Theological Schools' Fact Books and Data tables found online. These include: the *Fact Book on Theological Education 1978-79*, which is the earliest available online and covers the years 1970-1978; the *Fact Book on Theological Education 1980-81*, which covers the year 1980; the *ATS Data Tables 2006-2007*, which cover the year 2006; and the *ATS Annual Data Tables 2013-14*, which cover the years 2009-2013. These reports are available online, and specific references to each online document are included in the bibliography for this chapter.

Rationale for Data Chosen

The rationale for choosing data that includes schools in both the United States and Canada for all years covered is because the earliest data sets report on all of North America without distinguishing between the two nations; the choice to include Canada in this report, despite the focus on United States theological education in the dissertation, is to keep the data sets symmetrical in terms of this reporting. The rationale for choosing the years listed is the following: The data between 1970 and 1980 show the first documented enrollments of Asian, Hispanic, Black, and International (Visa) students in theological education in North America. The year 2006 was the peak enrollment year for theological schools in the United States and Canada, which provides a high waterline for analysis of the racial/ethnic demographics of theological school enrollments over the last forty-three years. The year 2013 is the most recent for which complete data are available.

Interpretation of Data

The enrollment data reveal that increases in enrollments of Asian, Black, Hispanic, and International (Visa) students have been significant since the 1970s. This points toward the growing linguistic, educational, and cultural diversity in our student

bodies and helps to make the case for an examination of writing pedagogy in theological education today.

ATS Membership Changes

Each year, the ATS's materials indicate how many member schools reported data on student enrollments. In the earliest report available, the ATS notes that of the 189 schools listed in 1972, five were predominantly Black institutions and 184 were predominantly White, and most were Protestant.[274] In the *Fact Book 1980-1981*, the number of predominantly Black institutions enrolled in the ATS remained steady at five while the number of predominantly White schools rose.[275] The major leaps in ATS school membership enrollments in the late twentieth-century seem to have happened starting in 1964, when Roman Catholic institutions began joining the association during the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Between 1964 and 1980, sixty-four Roman Catholic schools joined the ATS[276], which could account for some of the shifts in student demographics.

[274] Information from the *ATS Fact Book, 1978-1979*, 9.
[275] See the *ATS Fact Book, 1980-1981*, 5.
[276] See the *ATS Fact Book, 1980-1981*, 27.

Appendix B

Head Count Enrollment by Gender, 1972-2013
All ATS Schools in USA and Canada

Year of Enrollment→	**1972**	**1978**	**2006**	**2009**	**2013**
Women	3,358 (10.2%)	8,972 (19.3%)	27,921 (34.4%)	26,034 (34.8%)	24,663 (34.1%)
Men	29,678 (89.8%)	37,488 (80.7%)	53,142 (65.6%)	48,730 (65.2%)	47,715 (65.9%)
Total	33,036	46,460	81,063	74,764	72,378

Overview of & Rationale for the Table

The data from this table are taken from the Association of Theological Schools' Fact Books and Data tables found online. These include: the *Fact Book on Theological Education 1978-79*, which covers the years 1972-1978; the *ATS Data Tables 2006-2007*, which cover the year 2006; and the *ATS Annual Data Tables 2013-14*, which cover the years 2009-2013. Nothing is available on gender enrollments before 1972. These reports are available online, and specific references to each online document are included in the bibliography of this chapter.

The rationale for choosing the years listed is the following: The data between 1972 and 1978 show the beginning of the influx of women students in theological education in North America. The year 2006 was the peak enrollment for theological schools in the North America and so provides a high waterline for analysis. The year 2009 provides a view of the drop off in overall enrollment but also points to a slight lag in the decrease of women students. Finally, the year 2013 is the most recent for which complete data are available.

Interpretation

From the early 1970s until the 2010s, the enrollment of women students in professional and research programs in graduate theological education was on the rise.

Since 2006, which was the peak year for enrollment numbers for all students, the number of women has started to drop although not as swiftly as the enrollment of men.

Appendix C

I Want to Write Something So Simply
by Mary Oliver[277]

I want to write something
so simply
about love
or about pain
that even
as you are reading
you feel it
and as you read
you keep feeling it
and though it be my story
it will be common,
though it be singular
it will be known to you
so that by the end
you will think—
no, you will realize—
that it was all the while
yourself arranging the words,
that it was all the time
words that you yourself,
out of your heart
had been saying.

[277] This poem was included in Ana Ibarra's reflection on writing theology in English, sent as a personal email to me, dated January 26, 2015. Oliver's poem is easily found online on a variety of websites and blogs. It was originally published in Oliver's book of poetry, *Evidence: Poems* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 42.

Appendix D

Spanish Language Version of a Reflection on Writing Theology in English
by Ana Ibarra[278]

Escribir teología ha sido un gran reto. Poder expresar en palabras lo que estoy entendiendo y creyendo no ha sido nada fácil. Al iniciar mis estudios de teología en un país extranjero, creía que la máxima dificultad seria la de escribir mis trabajos en mi segunda lengua, ingles. Sin embargo, al conseguir que uno de mi profesores me dejara escribir en español, me di cuenta que no solo era escribir en ingles lo mas difícil, sino el poder describir en palabras tu experiencia interior para transmitirla lo mas cercana posible, era el reto más importante. Aun así, sin comparación alguna, escribir en español me hacía expresar mejor mi experiencia. Entonces entendí que era mejor escribir en español y después traducir al ingles, pero esto significaba doble trabajo.

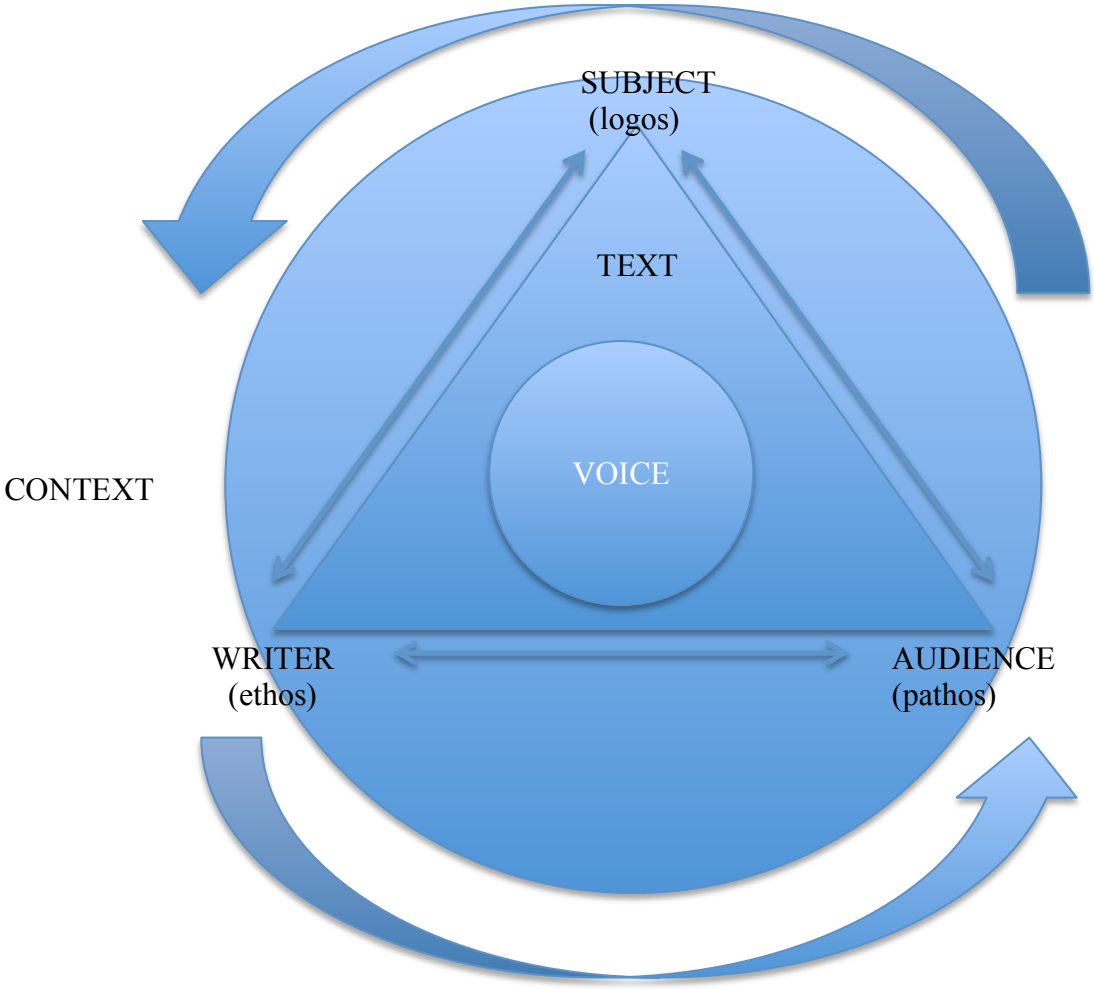
Es en esta experiencia, de traducir mis pensamientos, me di cuenta de lo diferente que es mi lengua comparada con el ingles. Cuando escribo en ingles siento que mis pensamientos no están completos. Para los hispano-parlantes, una sola palabra logra en español una idea completa. En ingles escribir la misma idea requiere ser mas detallado sin dejar nada a la imaginación. El escribir en ingles limita mi manera de expresarme pues estoy más preocupada en escribirlo correctamente para que una persona nativa americana pueda comprenderlo. Escribir en español me permite ver mis sentimientos con mas claridad y en ingles siento que mis palabras no describen a profundidad mi experiencia.

Las primeras clases de teología recuerdo haberme sentido en conflicto entre aprender a expresar mis pensamientos y escribirlo claramente en ingles. Recuerdo que durante la clase de "Writing Theology Well" de Lucretia Yaghjian leimos un poema de Mary Oliver "I Want to Write Something So Simply," que me hizo pensar en lo que un buen escrito puede hacer en una persona. Lograr que alguien se sienta identificado y conectado con mis experiencias me dio esperanza para avanzar en este reto. Sin embargo, me sigo preguntando, ¿podré lograr alguna vez escribir en un lenguaje que no es el mío y trasmitir mi experiencia como lo hago en español?

[278] Ana Ibarra, personal email dated January 26, 2015. Used with permission.

Appendix E

FIGURE 1
A Rhetorical Triangle for Theological Writing



Appendix F

Telling the Story
by Naomi Shihab Nye[279]

In America, what's real
juggles with what isn't:
a woman I know props fabulous tulips
in her flowerbed, in snow.

Streets aren't gold, but they could be.
Once a traveler mailed letters
in a trashcan for a week.
He thought they were going somewhere
In America everything is going somewhere.

I answered a telephone
on a California street.
Hello? It was possible.
A voice said, "There is no scientific proof
that God is a man."
"Thank you." I was standing there.
Was this meant for me?
It was not exactly the question
I had been asking, but it kept me busy a while,
telling the story.

Some start out
with a big story
that shrinks.

Some stories accumulate power
like a sky gathering clouds,
quietly, quietly,
till the story rains around you.

Some get tired of the same story
and quit speaking;
a farmer leaning into
his row of potatoes,
a mother walking the same child
to school.
What will we learn today?

---

[279] Naomi Shihab Nye, "Telling the Story," in *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems* (Portland, OR: The Eighth Mountain Press, 1995), 132-133.

There should be an answer,
and it should
change.

Appendix G

Class Notes from TMST 7081, Theological Research & Writing
School of Theology and Ministry, Boston College
April 29, 2015

1. *What does the academy (university) want from my writing?*
   - critical approach
   - systematic thinking
   - originality
   - build own voice
   - integrity
   - standard

2. *What does society want from my writing?*
   - short, clear, and striking
   - standard work, add value to society
   - address issues pragmatically
   - discern the God they long for

3. *What does the church want from my writing?*
   - based on two definitions of church:
     1) write to support teaching of authority
     2) write for the people (who don't want to read)
   - in conformity for salvation
   - express truth of faith with clarity and consistency

4. *What do I want from my writing?*
   - advance knowledge, communicate mysteries, & meet all academic requirements
   - communicate my ideas easily
   - to be helpful to church, society, self
   - persuade other people
   - inspire people, write beautifully

5. *What does God want from my writing?*
   - make God's will known
   - transcend myself toward God
   - turn toward God
   - become better in apostolate
   - language of love, sincerity, and good life
   - no cheating—honesty, be yourself & right with God
   - share God's presence through writing so writers and readers feel love

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